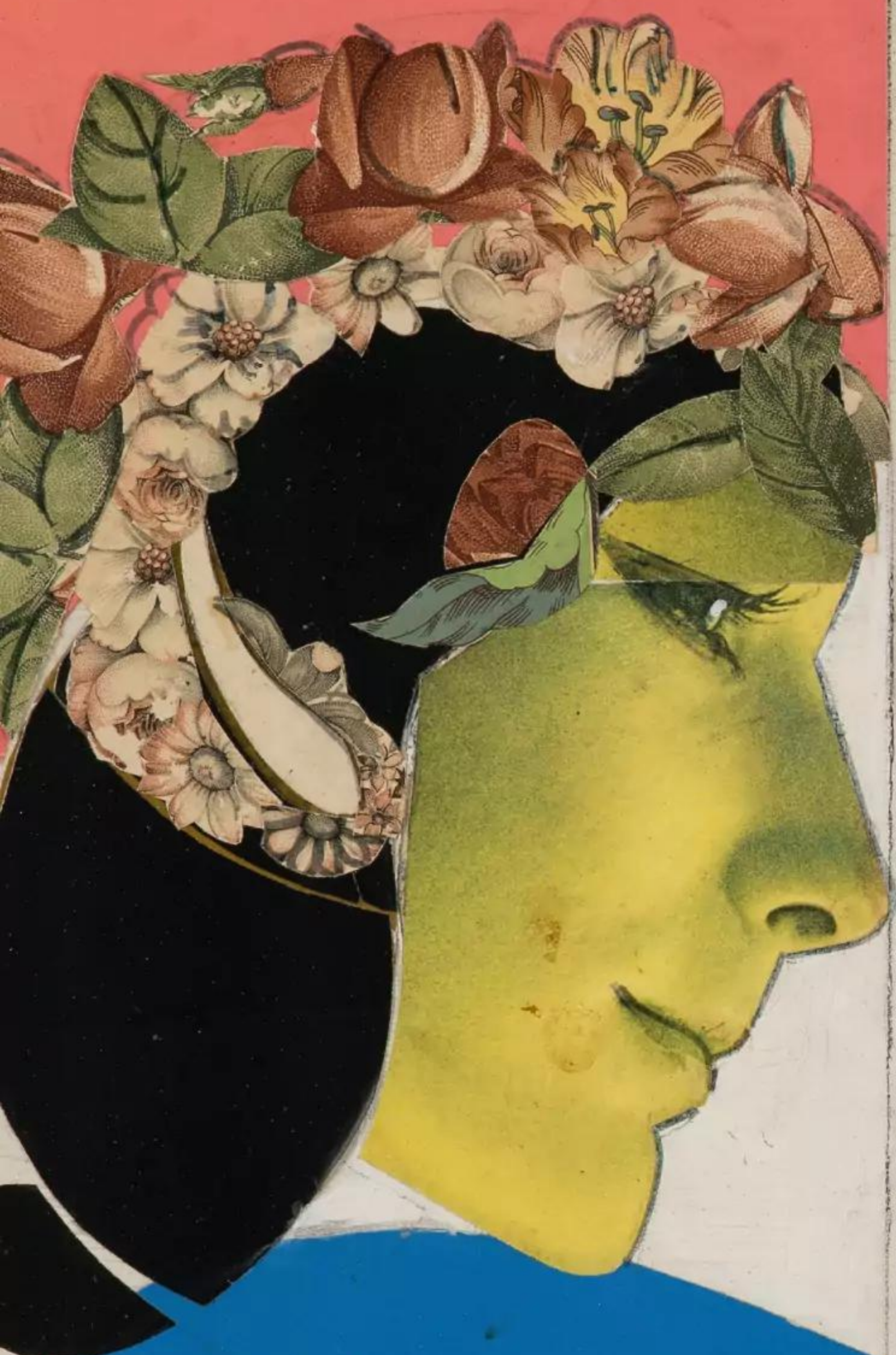


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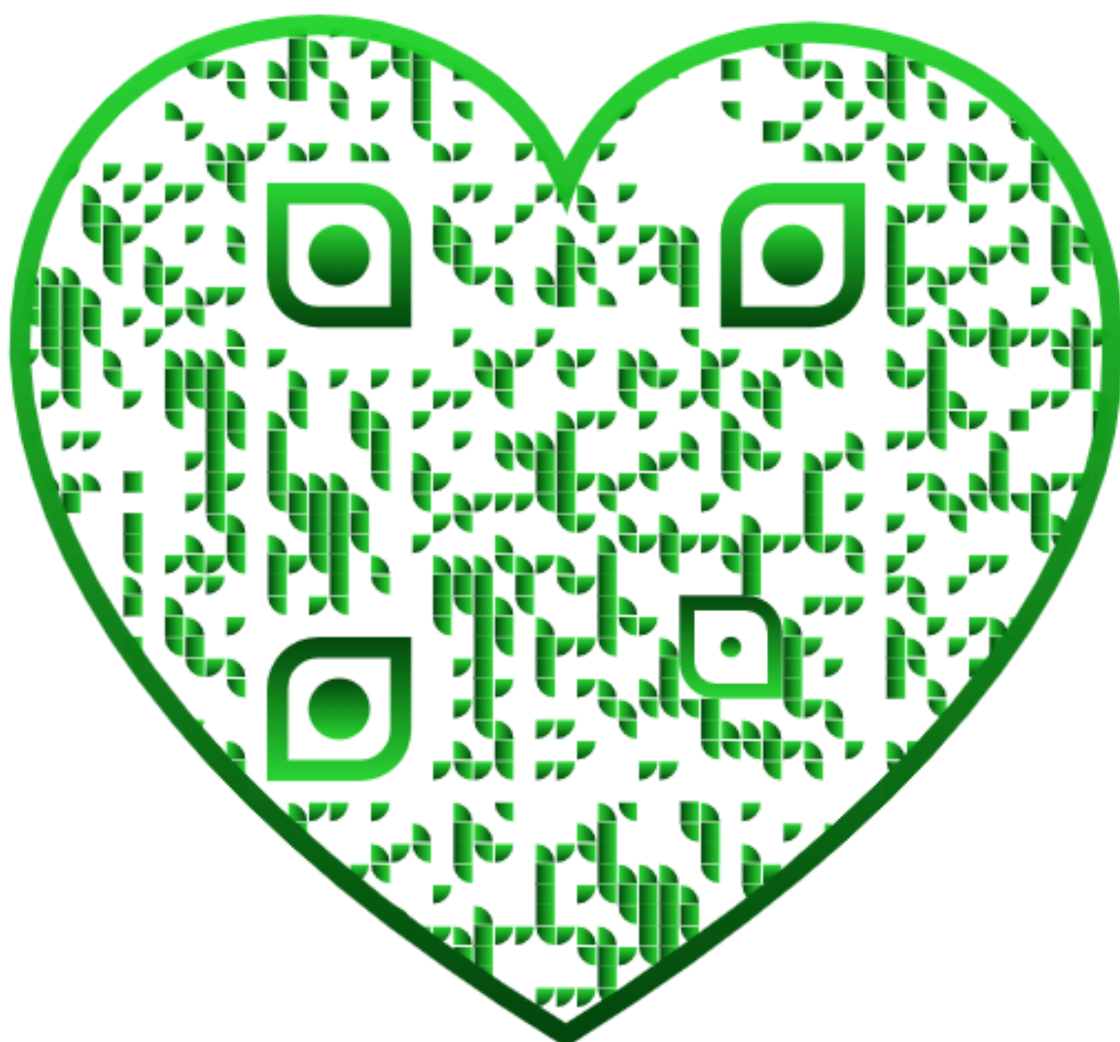
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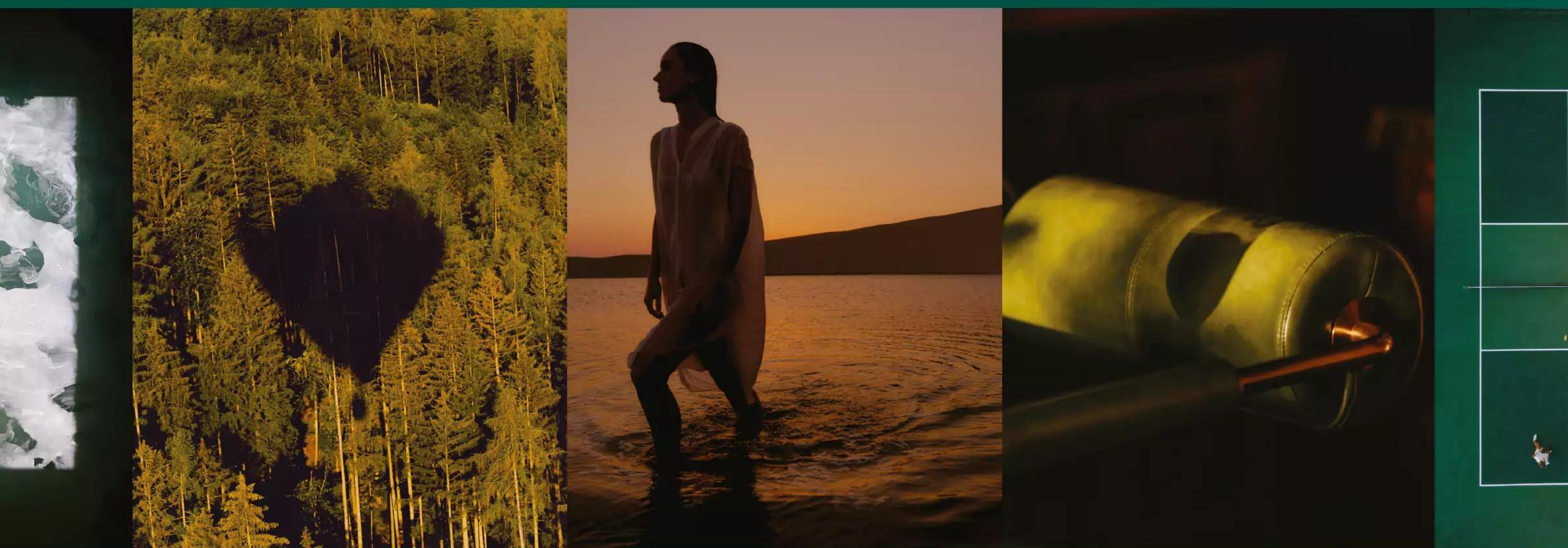
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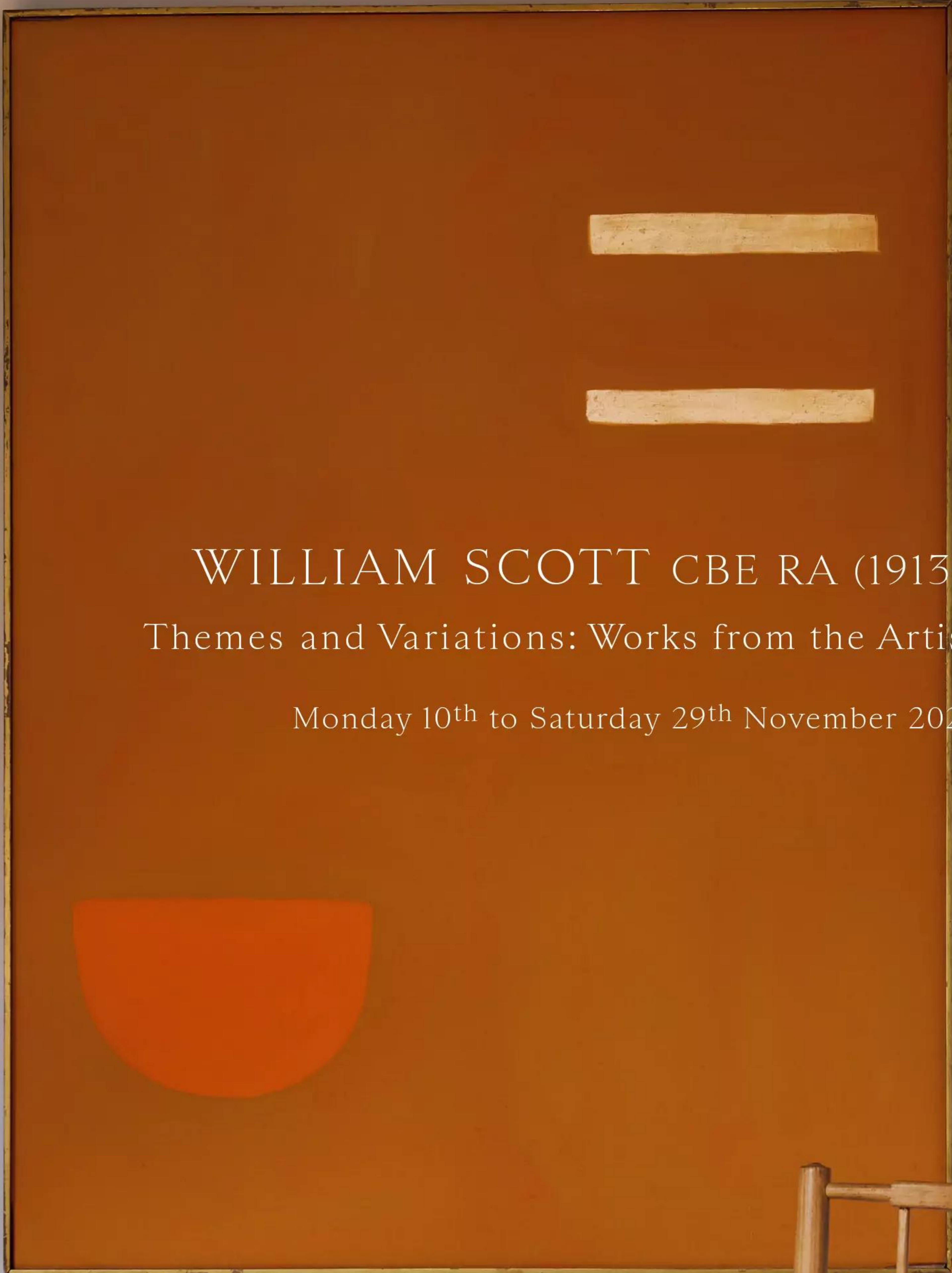
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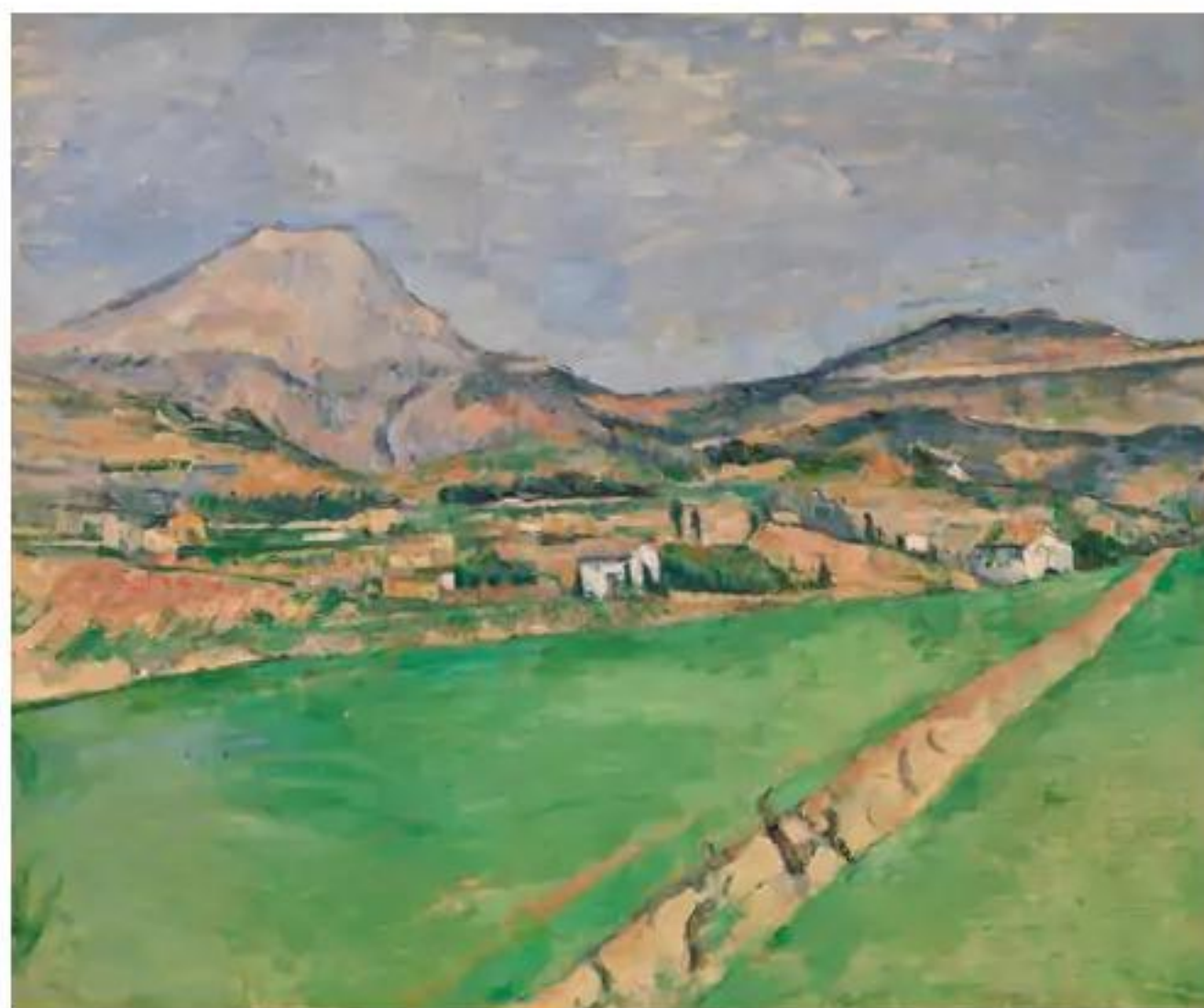
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COVER *Untitled (Woman with Flower)*, 1969, Romare Bearden (1911–88), collage on Masonite, 76.5 × 61.6cm. Studio Museum in Harlem. Photo: John Berens; courtesy Studio Museum in Harlem; © 2025 Romare Bearden Foundation / licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

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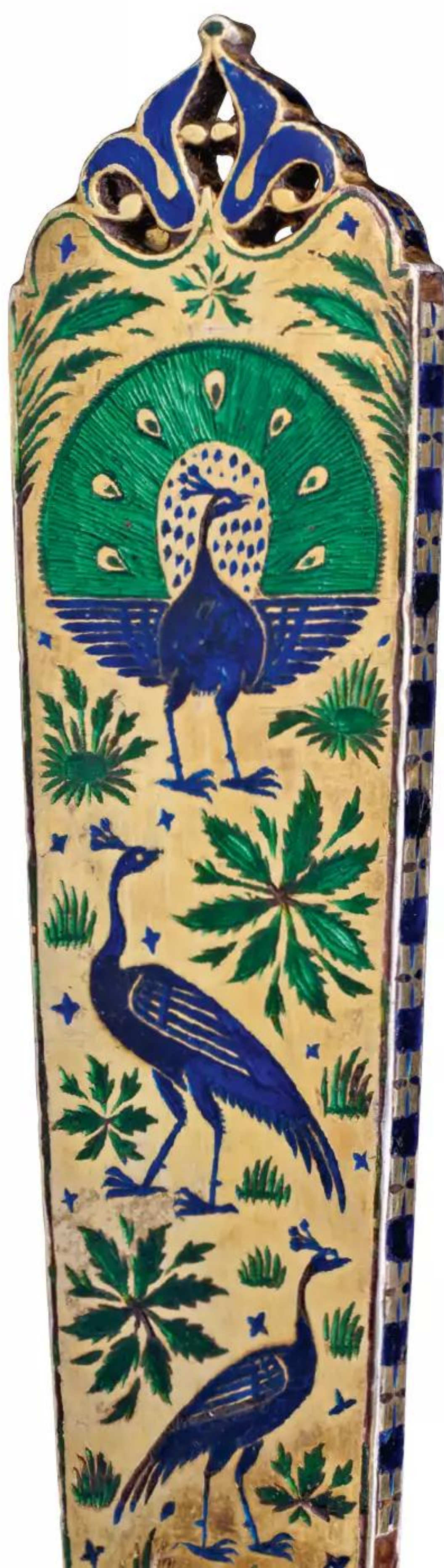


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EDITOR'S LETTER

A turning point?



Portrait of Elisabeth Lederer, 1914–19, Gustav Klimt (1862–1918), oil on canvas, 179.7 x 129.5cm. Courtesy Sotheby's

While November might conjure images of grey days and bleak weather to many readers of *Apollo*, this year it also promises the closest thing the art world has to sunny uplands. The November auctions in New York are looking better than many recent auction seasons. By better, I mean that there are more high-quality works of art presented for sale than there have been recently. The notable uptick has, as many commentators have pointed out, been driven by single-owner collections.

As the announcements began in the late summer, it seemed as though Christie's was 'winning' the auction season. The collections of Elaine Wynn and Robert Weiss, among others, suggest that auctions of 20th-century art might be back to bringing in around \$50 million for a single work. Wynn bought Francis Bacon's portrait of Lucian Freud, which she has donated to LACMA, for \$142 million

in 2013 and, while it might not be for sale, it does suggest the realms of value that her collection comes from.

All of this, however, was blown out of the water by Sotheby's when it announced that it would be selling 55 works from the collection of Leonard Lauder. The auction is expected to make around \$400 million. While Lauder gave away swathes of his extraordinary collection to museums including the Met, he was such a comprehensive and dedicated collector that even a crumb of his collection is often worth more than whatever else comes to market – though it remains to be seen if this will bring in profits to the auction house or just earn it market share. A lot will depend upon the deals it has done around guarantees, but that will be a conversation for another day. If all goes well, this sale will be considered an excellent augur for Sotheby's New York move to the Breuer building.

At the moment, the talk is that this could be a turning point for the beleaguered art market. But it is worth considering that the market is not suffering merely because of buyer confidence; it is profoundly entwined with geopolitical events and developments there might prove more important than any one auction result. It is also worth remembering that the sale of Yves Saint Laurent's collection in 2009 managed to be the record-breaking sale for a single-owner collection while doing nothing to stimulate the rest of the market for the remainder of the year.

I hope this doomsaying is unnecessary. And there are certainly green shoots elsewhere. The Old Masters market seems to be picking up faster than the modern and contemporary markets. Even six months ago Old Masters were showing 10 per cent growth compared to the flatlining or worse of those other categories. Anecdotally, Old Master dealers and auction house specialists are talking up a surprise growth in younger clients. It would be pleasing if works of art that have been so long ignored suddenly become valued at what they're worth, but it would also be nice to see the market embrace a sense of adventure again. That's the thing about the art market: no one can ever be quite sure what makes it go round. All eyes will be on New York.

**EDWARD BEHRENS,
EDITOR**

AGENDA

Apollo's exhibitions of the month



1

The Carracci Drawings: The making of the Galleria Farnese

Musée du Louvre, Paris
5 November–2 February 2026

The elaborate frescoes of the Galleria Farnese in Rome are considered the crowning achievement of Annibale and Agostino Carracci, who decorated the vaulted room in the Palazzo Farnese between 1597 and 1608. Here, preparatory drawings from rough sketches to large-scale cartoons laying out the brothers' designs give an intimate sense of the gallery's interior.

2

Wright of Derby: From the Shadows

National Gallery, London
7 November–10 May 2026

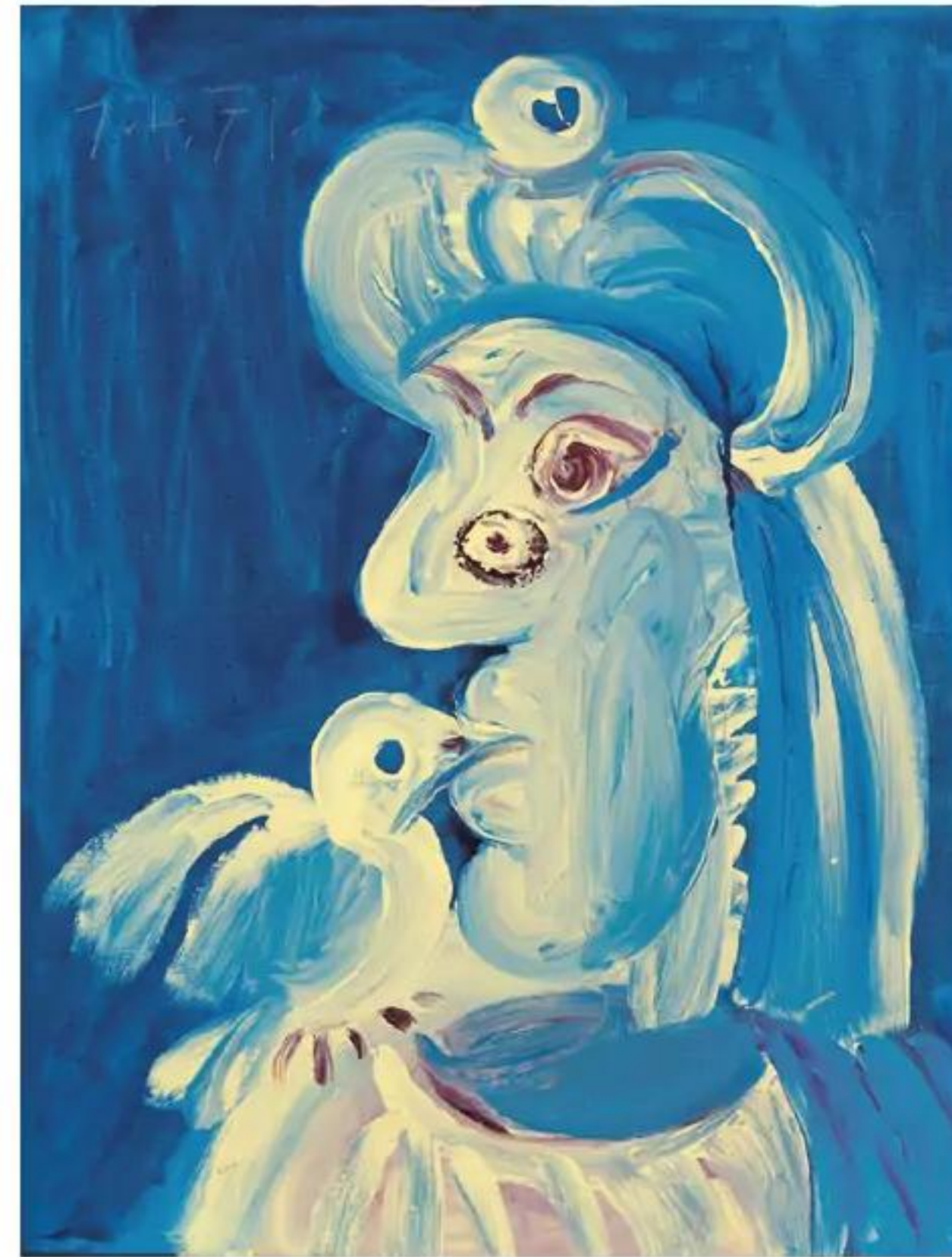
Joseph Wright of Derby's reputation as a 'painter of light' is well-known; this exhibition shows that his tenebrism was not merely a demonstration of virtuosic skill but also a vehicle for conveying certain moods and themes or dramatising moments of discovery.

3

Turner and Constable: Rivals and Originals

Tate Britain, London
27 November–12 April 2026

Many stories recount the rivalry between Britain's most celebrated landscape painters: as one tale goes, Turner became enraged after Constable used his connections to squeeze one of his own paintings between two of Turner's in an exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1831. Marking the 250th anniversary of both artists' births, this show traces how their careers developed in parallel.

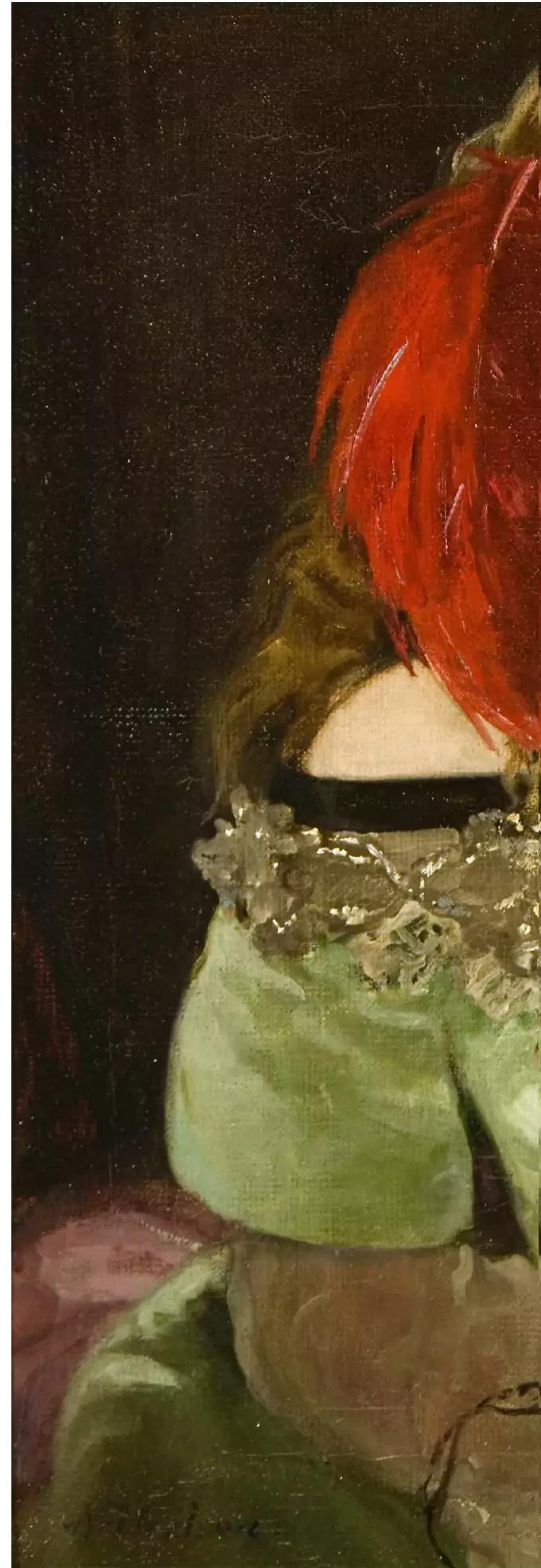


4

Late Picasso

Moderna Museet, Stockholm
22 November–5 April 2026

Picasso's strong drive to reinvent his practice was as steady as ever in the final decade of his life, this exhibition argues. *Woman with a Bird* (1971; pictured) is an excellent example of his late style: a portrait of a woman and a dove rendered in a simple palette of bright blue, purple and white, the work combines a cubist sensibility and a career-long interest in birds with looser, freer brushwork than can be seen in much of his earlier work.

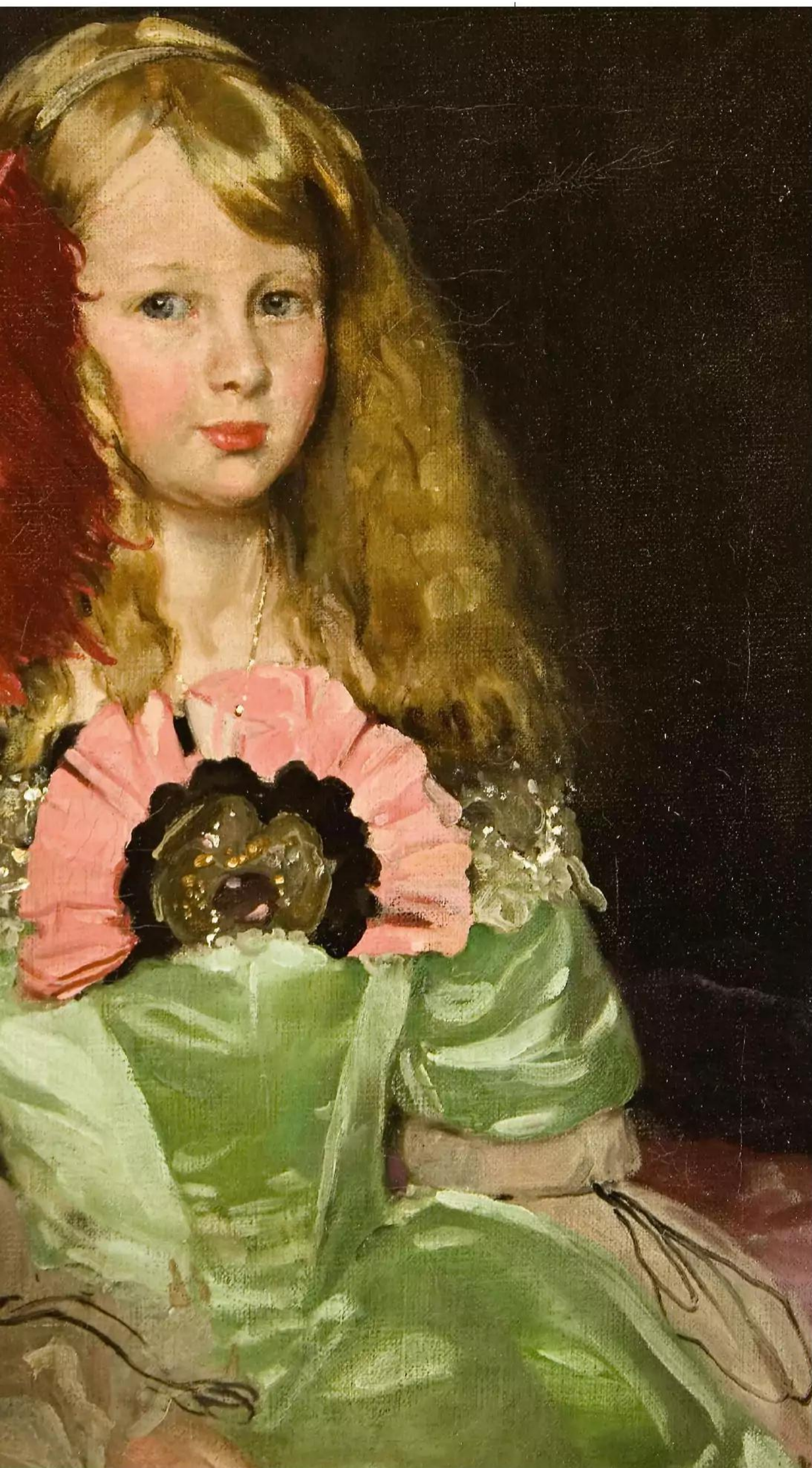


5

William Nicholson

Pallant House Gallery,
Chichester
22 November–10 May 2026

Billed as the first major
exhibition of the British artist's



work in two decades, this show presents his career in all its variety: still lifes, particularly elegant depictions of food and household objects; landscapes; woodcuts; illustrations for children's books, notably *The*

Velveteen Rabbit (1922); as well as costume and poster designs for London theatre productions including *Hamlet* (1894) and *Cinderella* (1895).

1. Photo: © Royal Collection Enterprises Limited 2025/Royal Collection Trust / 2. Photo: © Derby Museums / 3. Photo: © Abbot Hall, Kendal (Lakeland Arts Trust) / 4. Photo: Marc Damage; © FABA; © Succession Picasso/Bildupphovsrátt 2025 / 5. Courtesy Pallant House Gallery / 6. Courtesy Cleveland Museum of Art / 7. © Succession Wifredo Lam, ADAGP, Paris/ARS, New York 2025

6

Filippino Lippi and Rome

Cleveland Museum of Art
30 November–22 February 2026

In the late 1480s, Filippino Lippi – a former apprentice of Botticelli – left his native Florence for Rome, where he had been commissioned to decorate the chapel of the Basilica Santa Maria sopra Minerva. Although he eventually returned to



Florence, the works here demonstrate how his style evolved in the Eternal City: paintings and drawings created before and after Lippi's Rome years are shown alongside works he made in the city, including *The Holy Family with Saint John the Baptist and Saint Margaret* (c. 1488–93; pictured).



7

Wifredo Lam: When I Don't Sleep, I Dream

Museum of Modern Art, New York
10 November–11 April 2026

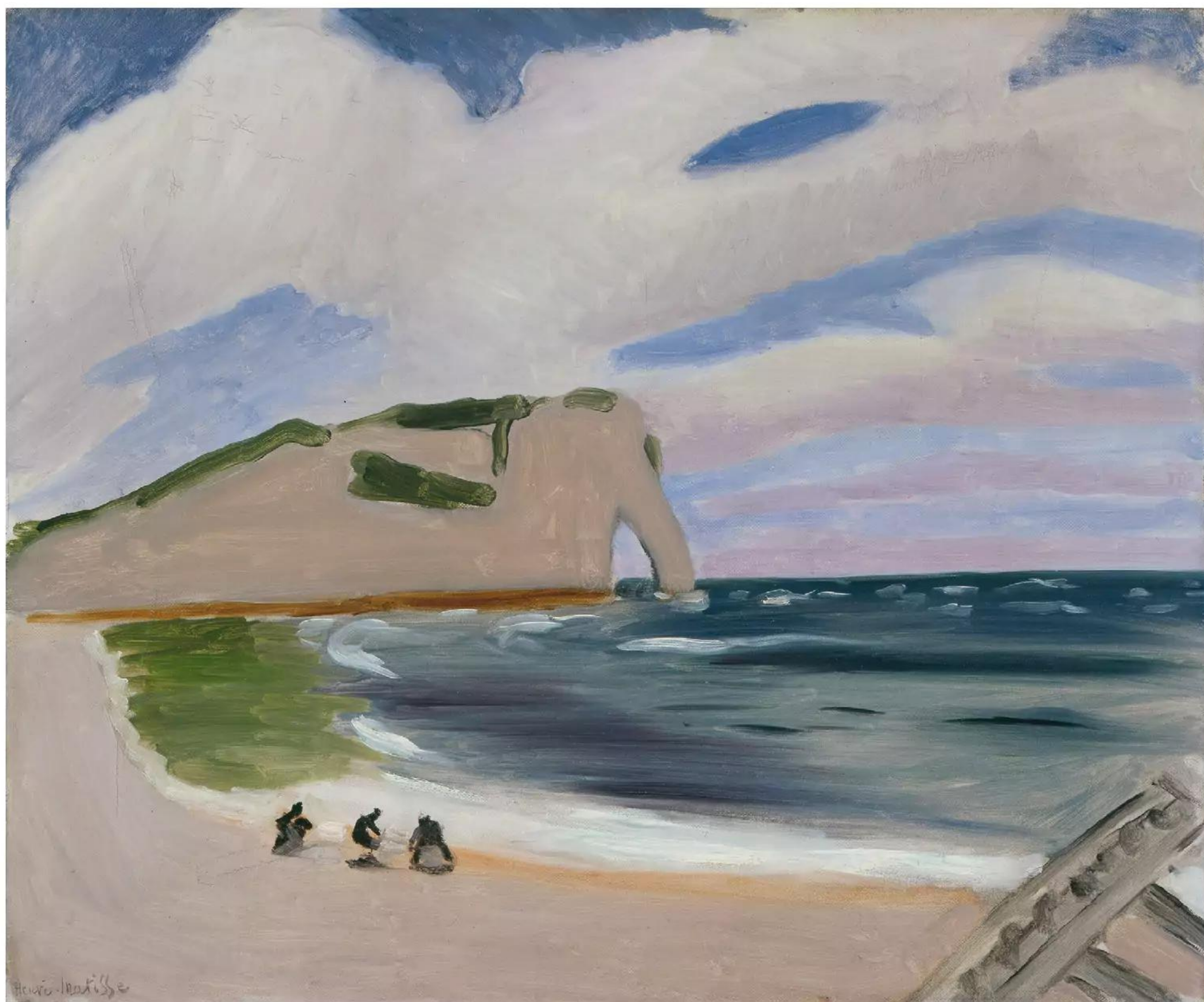
The first comprehensive survey of the Cuban modernist in the United States takes in all aspects

of his career, from his interrogation of social injustice to his experiments with Surrealism. Highlights include *Grande Composition* (1949), which was recently acquired by the museum from a Parisian collector and has not been seen by the public for 20 years.

AGENDA

Four new exhibitions investigate how artists have depicted their surroundings, from the coast of Normandy to the mountains of New York State

Lay of the land



△ Étretat, beyond the cliffs: Courbet, Monet, Matisse
Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon
29 November–1 March 2026

The chalk cliffs of Étretat in Normandy have inspired some of France's most celebrated artists: Monet alone painted the coastline dozens of times. How this sleepy fishing village became such a hub of artistic activity in the 19th century is the subject of this show, which includes striking views by Matisse (pictured), Courbet, Delacroix, Boudin and even Victor Hugo.



△ Winter Count: Embracing the Cold
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
21 November–22 March 2026

This exhibition looks at how winter has influenced artists from Canadian Impressionists such as Lawren Harris to European painters including Pissarro and Franz Marc. Objects by Indigenous makers make up a large portion of the show.



▽ Of Light and Air: Winslow Homer in Watercolour
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
2 November–19 January 2026

Homer's vivid watercolours of the Caribbean and the east coast of North America, from Maine's beaches to the Adirondack Mountains of New York, convey the artist's skill in capturing subtle variations of light and atmosphere. Fifty of these works, as well as 11 oil paintings, are on display here; because of their fragility, this is the first time the full collection has been shown in five decades.



◁ Love & Landscape: Stanley Spencer in Suffolk
Gainsborough's House, Sudbury
15 November–22 March 2026

Spencer is synonymous with Cookham: so deep was his connection to the Berkshire village where he was born that he rarely painted anywhere else. His imagination was, however, captured by Suffolk's coastline during trips to the county in the 1920s and '30s, as seen here in some 20 works, including rare loans from private collections.



Yoshida Hiroshi (Japanese, 1876–1950), *Lugano* (detail), from the series *Europe*, 1925. Woodblock print; ink and color on paper, 9 13/16 × 14 9/16 in. Gift of Charles and Robyn Citrin, 2016, SN11557.122

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AGENDA

From 18th-century needlework to Bauhaus designs, here are four new shows about textiles that shouldn't be missed

Threads of history



▽ **Marta Palau:**
My Paths are Earthly
Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City
15 November–3 May 2026

This retrospective of the Spanish-Mexican artist, who is best known for textile works made with natural fibres native to Mexico, probes her exploration of exile and migration. Highlights include *Naualli* (n.d.; pictured), which takes its name from a Nahuatl word describing a shapeshifting spirit.



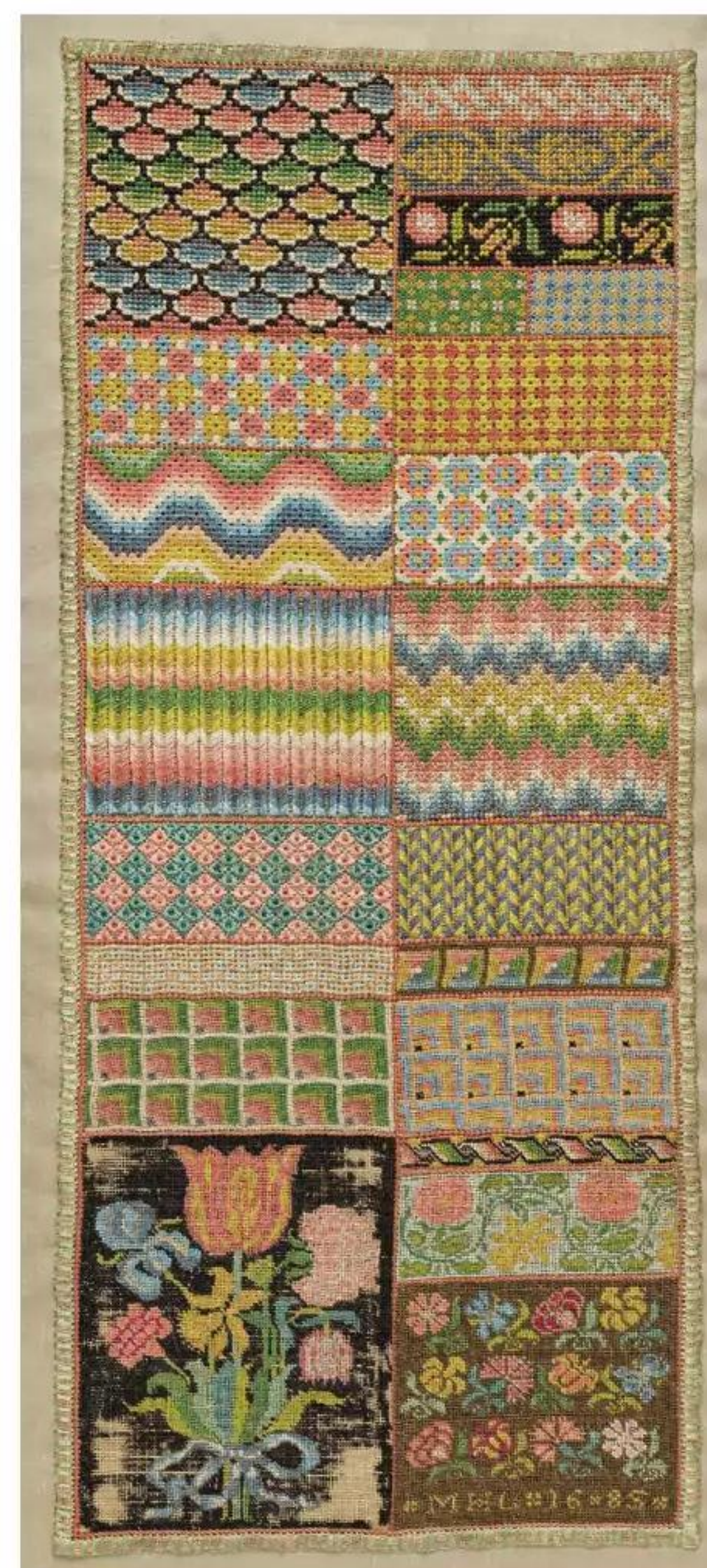
△ **Małgorzata Mirga-Tas:**
An Alternative Story
Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg
22 November–15 March 2026

Handkerchiefs, tablecloths, curtains, clothing and sheets are sliced and stitched together in the Polish-Romani artist's graphic textile collages, adding a layer of intimacy to her tender depictions of daily life in Roma communities past and present. This is the largest exhibition of her work in Germany to date and includes works from the *Re-enchanting the World* series, first shown at the Venice Biennale in 2022.



△ **Anni Albers:**
Constructing Textiles
Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern
7 November–22 February 2026

The museum named for Albers's teacher at the Bauhaus school is an apt location for this show, which traces how the artist's fibre art drew on design and architectural principles she learned there.



◁ **Embroidered Histories**
de Young Museum,
San Francisco
29 November–6 December 2026

This exhibition presents two centuries of needlework in Europe, unpicking how embroidery samplers – long regarded as simple reference tools for a domestic craft – came to be regarded as works of art in the 18th century. Examples here include intricate patterns, motifs and techniques, as well as text and illustrations recording significant events.



Anselm Kiefer Becoming the Sea

October 18, 2025–January 25, 2026

Anselm Kiefer: Becoming the Sea is presented with generous support from the William T. Kemper Foundation, Jeanne and Rex Sinquefeld, and Gagolian.

Anselm Kiefer, German, born 1945; *Anselm fuit hic* (Anselm Was Here) (detail), 2024; emulsion, oil, acrylic, shellac, gold leaf, and sediment of electrolysis on canvas; 30 feet 10 1/16 inches x 27 feet 6 11/16 inches; © Anselm Kiefer, Collection of the artist and courtesy Gagolian 2025.309
Photo: Nina Slavcheva

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NUSANTARA *Six Centuries of Indonesian Textiles*

September 12, 2025–January 11, 2026

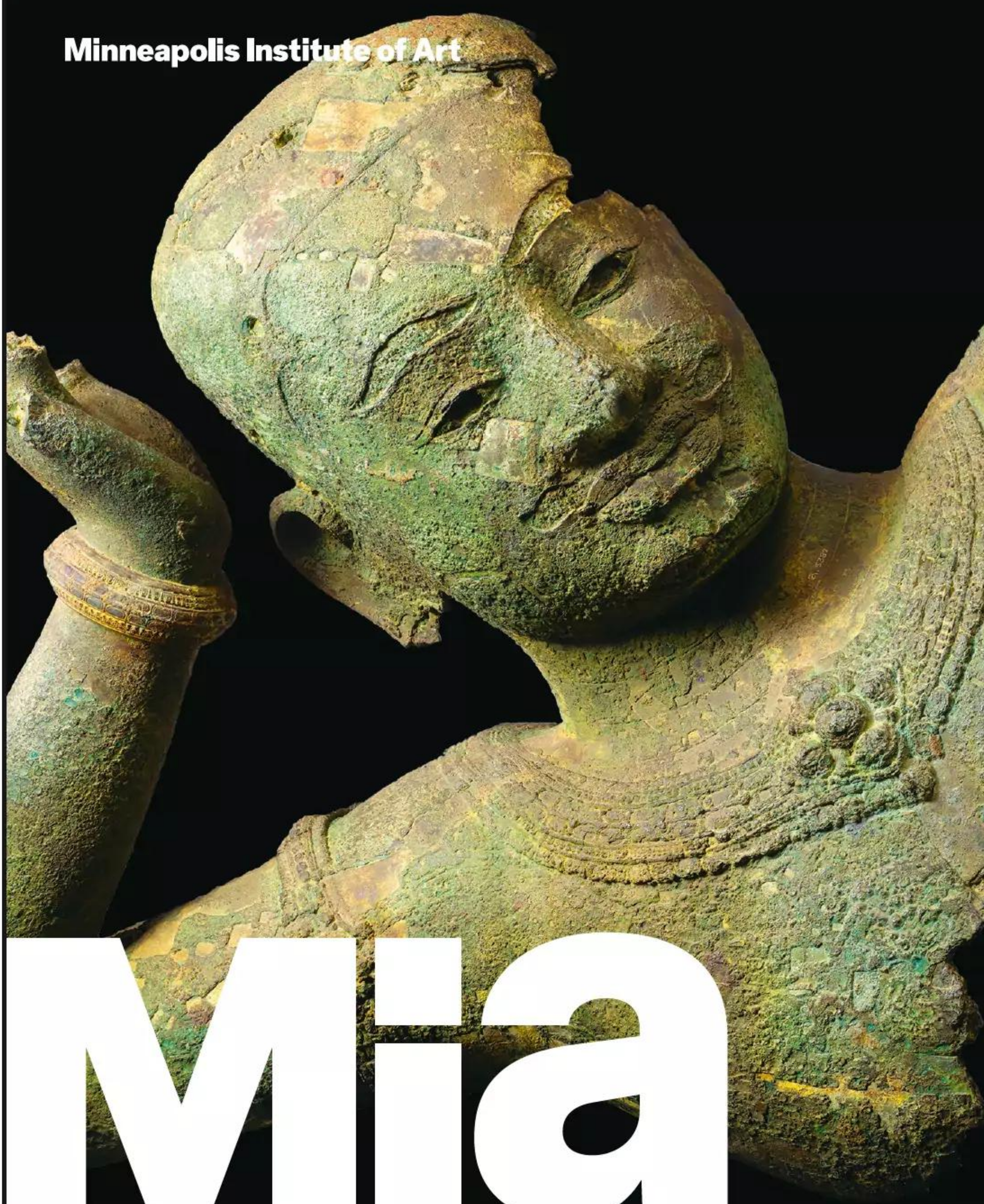
Formal Court Waist Wrapper (Dodot Bangun Tulak Alas-Alasan Pinarada Mas) (detail), Indonesia, Java, Surakarta, ca. 1890. Cotton and gold leaf; tie-dye (tritik) and gluework. Yale University Art Gallery, Robert J. Holmgren and Anita E. Spertus Collection, Promised gift of Thomas Jaffe, B.A. 1971

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Mebon Reclining Vishnu (detail), National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
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AROUND THE GALLERIES

Asian Art in London



Kanbara, from the series *53 Stations of the Tōkaidō Road*, c. 1833, Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858), woodblock print on paper, 25.4 × 36.8cm. Japan Print Gallery, London

The 28th edition of the city-wide event promises fresh discoveries for collectors, scholars and enthusiasts alike, writes **MICHAEL DELGADO**

There were so many fairs blossoming everywhere,' says Henry Howard-Sneyd, chairman of Asian Art for Sotheby's Europe and the Americas, when I ask him why he decided to set up Asian Art in London (AAL) almost three decades ago. 'It was costing dealers a huge amount of money to move half a mile down the road to a big venue when they already had a gallery space of their own.' All this was several years before Frieze, the biggest fair of them all, came to town.

The solution, for Howard-Sneyd, was an event designed to celebrate Asian art in all its myriad forms, with galleries hosting special exhibitions around London, auction houses holding displays and sales, and a programme of lectures

and talks covering everything from contemporary Chinese craft to Indian tapestries. The exhibitors are still all under one roof, if you think of that roof as London itself, Howard-Sneyd says; and the event has a range that reflects the size and variety of both the city and the category of 'Asian art'.

Staying specific within that broad remit is paramount. Many galleries this year are homing in on specific cultures, periods or mediums: Marchant is holding an exhibition to mark its centenary, of Imperial porcelain from Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong, for instance, while Amir Mohtashemi has a selection of ceramics on show at its new gallery in St James's, including 16th-century polychrome Iznik ware from Ottoman Turkey. Sotheby's

is giving space for displays by several other dealers, including Susan Page, showing a selection of richly decorated Chinese snuff bottles from the 18th and 19th centuries. Anrad Gallery is celebrating modern practitioners of four Indian artistic traditions in its exhibition 'The Living Tapestry', which includes metal Gadwakam sculptures from Chhattisgarh, narrative scrolls created by Pattachitra painters in Odisha (formerly Orissa), and intricate Bikaner and Mughal miniatures. For Howard-Sneyd, an expert in Chinese art, a lecture by Weng Yanjun, director of the Jingdezhen Imperial Kiln Museum, on blue-and-white porcelain production over the past 700 years will be a chance to take stock of the scholarship

on Chinese porcelain at a time when 'major excavations' in China are leading to more and more 'extraordinary discoveries'.

Perhaps the biggest benefit of AAL's gallery-by-gallery approach is that it has a longevity that fairs, which have to dismantle their tents or move out of their venues when the time is up, can't quite match. The guide to events and exhibitions going on during AAL is, Howard-Sneyd says, 'a pretty good guidebook to London's Asian art dealers whenever you turn up – even if you're not there for the event itself'.

Asian Art in London takes place from 27th October–6th November (www.asianartinlondon.com).

GALLERY HIGHLIGHTS



Dish on a low foot depicting the Allegory of Spring, c. 1580–1600, attributed to Jean de Court (active 1555–85), enamel on copper, diam. 28.3cm. Galerie Kugel, Paris

Lustreware: From Abbasid Iraq to Renaissance Italy

Until 21 November
Sam Fogg, London

The use of metallic oxide glaze in the production of ceramics originated in the Abbasid caliphate and spread into Europe in the late medieval period. In this exhibition of 40 ceramics, lusted bowls with animal motifs from 10th-century Iraq sit side by side with colourful Hispano-Moresque wares made in the 15th century.

Seriously.

21 November–31 January 2026
Sprüth Magers, London

From the gallows humour of Keith Arnatt's *Self-Burial* (1969) to the irreverence of Thomas Ruff's series *L'Empereur*

(1982), which captures the artist slumped over chairs in ever more absurd contortions, the works in this exhibition demonstrate the many ways in which humour manifests in conceptual art. The bulk of the show consists of photographs – by Sigmar Polke, John Baldessari, Bruce Nauman, Cindy Sherman and others – with some drawings and films also on display.

Immarcescible: Limoges Renaissance Enamels and their Collectors

Until 20 December
Galerie Kugel, Paris

Limoges has been associated with enamel since the very first workshops sprang up in the city in the 12th century. This show displays a group of richly decorated enamels

made between 1520 and 1620, mostly depicting biblical or mythological scenes. Thanks to the material's durability, these pieces are, as the exhibition title asserts, *immarcescible* (imperishable), and have retained their sheen over the centuries.

Lynn Chadwick: Hypercycle / Chapter 2: Archetype (1963–1977)

Until 20 November
Perrotin, New York

The second instalment of this three-year-long international exhibition series looks at the middle part of Chadwick's career, a period in which the sculptor began experimenting with polishing sections of his enigmatic, angular bronzes in order to achieve a mirror-like surface.

FAIRS IN FOCUS

PAN Amsterdam

2–9 November
RAI Amsterdam

As its name suggests, PAN Amsterdam aims to give as broad as possible a view of the Dutch art market. For its 38th edition, 125 exhibitors are assembling in the capital, bringing objects ranging from a 180-million-year-old ichthyosaurus skeleton to masterpieces of contemporary fine art and design. Japanese art is taking a front seat this year, as PAN commemorates the moment, 425 years ago, when the ship *De Liefde* docked at the island of Kuroshima, effectively kickstarting a trade relationship between the Netherlands and Japan. And so everything from 17th-century Arita ware and *tsuba* (sword guards) to 20th-century Japanese prints and tatami mats by contemporary makers are on display. The fair's Museum Spotlight section focuses on the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo, which is bringing Claes Oldenburg's monumental sculpture *Three-Way Plug, Scale D, Soft*, from 1970, to greet visitors at the entrance to the fair.



VIVID, 2019, Mae Engelgeer (b. 1982), paper yarn, cotton, linen, acrylic, 180 × 145cm. Rademakers Gallery, Amsterdam

MARCHANT

EST 1925

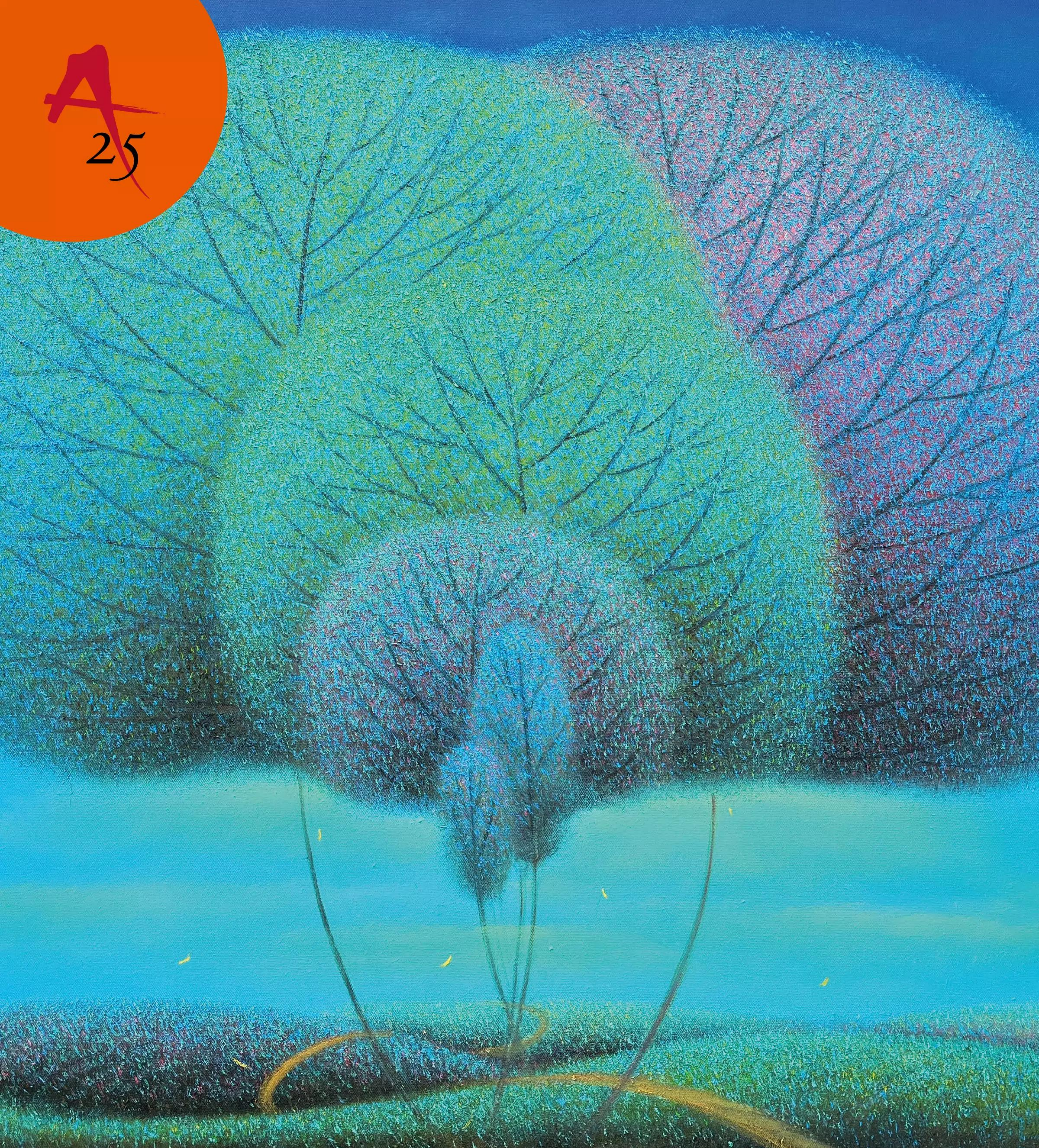
THE CENTENARY EXHIBITION: Imperial Porcelain of Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong 27th October - 7th November 2025



Chinese imperial porcelain blue and white vase of *zun* form, painted in the Ming style.
The base with a six-character sealmark of Qianlong in underglaze blue and of the period, 1736-1795.
9 7/8 inches, 25.2 cm high.

- From the collection of Evelyn Williams Meadows Norie (1862-1915), colonel and adjutant to King George V of Britain.
- Painted with an abundance of flowers, the design also forms the rebus *huakaifugui*, "may the blooming flowers bring you prosperity".





A
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Asian Art in London

27 October – 6 November 2025

asianartinlondon.com



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Qianlong period
(1735–1795)**



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IN PERSPECTIVE

A light in the darkness



Soliloquy, 2025, Danielle Mckinney (b. 1981), oil on linen, 18.4 × 22.2cm

HETTIE JUDAH on women, freedom and cigarettes in art

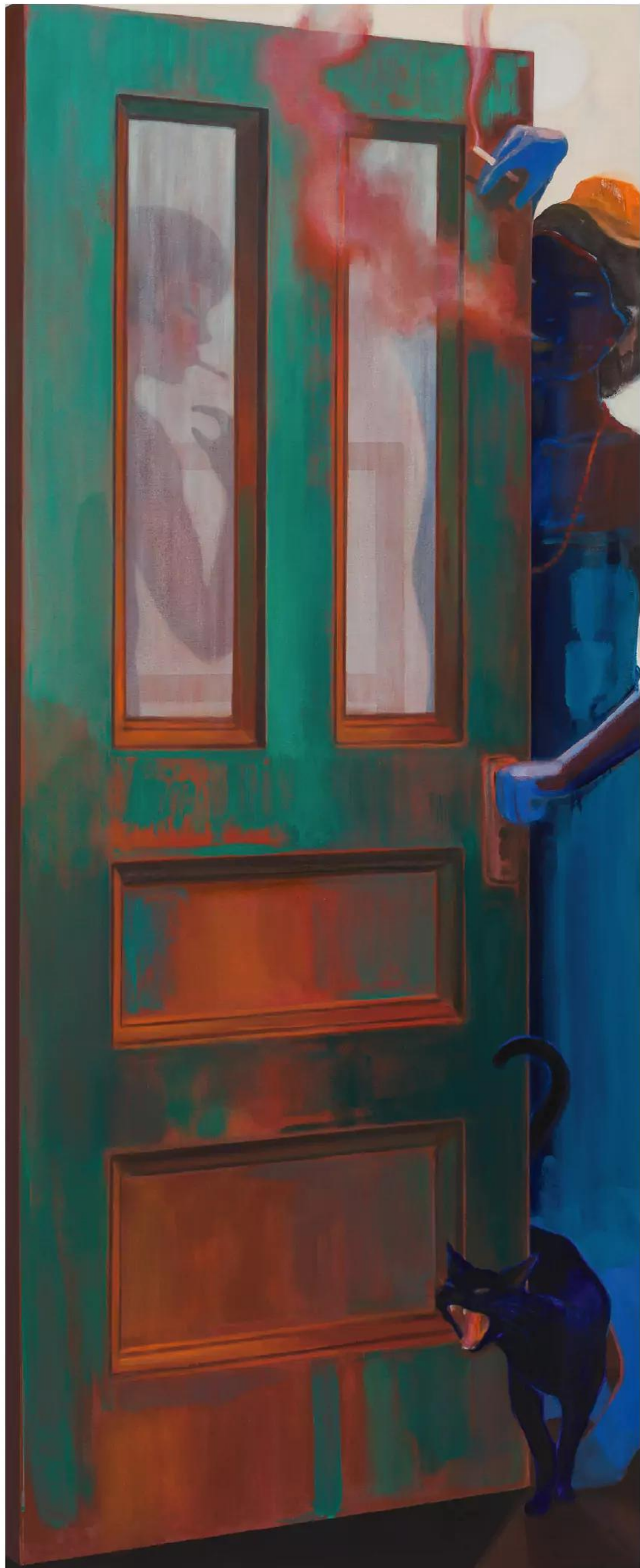
There is a danger of smoking becoming chic again. I blame artists. The choreography of cigarettic gestures is just too compelling, pictorially, to relinquish. Cigarettes perform as an extension of the arm, adding angular elongation to the expressive hand and wrist. Exhaled smoke offers a portrait of breath, warm from its permeation of the body's branched interior. Smoke mists the view, blurring the edges of forms and casting scenes into mannered ashy paleness. For painters and cinematographers alike, illumination from a struck

match or burning tip explodes drama into a dim scene.

The hot amber of a lit cigarette is echoed in red nail lacquer and the faint reflection of coloured neon on a woman's skin in Danielle Mckinney's *Soliloquy* (2025). It's a painting of intimate scale, with the top half of the woman's face and the length of her cigarette occupying its width. Her eyes are closed and her fingers stretch between the extended thrust of the cigarette and the velveteen suggestion of her gently parted lips. This is a private moment in a darkened room.

Mckinney is interested in drawing form out of darkness by dressing it with the faintest coloured light. Painted in a palette structured around rich tones of brown, hers is a nocturnal world in which Black women are depicted at rest in barely lit rooms.

Mckinney's women are self-contained, not waiting or performing, just present. In a few paintings they catch the gaze, but more often they seem unaware of the painter's intruding eye, or ours. Together with the low lighting, soft surfaces and elegant interiors, the cigarettes contribute to a vocabulary of



Untitled (After Vallotton), 2021, Lisa Brice (b. 1968), ink, gouache, synthetic tempera and neopastel on canvas, 200 × 82cm

private luxuriousness, suggesting liberation and a nostalgic vision of the modern woman c. 1975. Sometimes a cigarette is just a cigarette, but sometimes the implication of self-pleasuring it carries is hard to overlook: a soliloquy is, after all, high drama for a cast of one.

Whether in a pipe or cigarette, smoking tobacco was associated with deep, creative thought in the 19th and early 20th centuries: Sigmund Freud himself considered his cigars an essential aid to contemplation. Within Euro-American cultures, smoking was an occupation respectable only for men. Thus, the cigarette also became a sword of honour for the 'new woman', denoting intellect, independence and disdain for the rules of a society that denied her education, employment and suffrage.

In 1896, the American photographer Frances Benjamin Johnston staged a self-portrait in which she appears poised mid-conversation before a fire, skirts hoisted to the knee, with a cigarette jabbing the air before her right hand and a tankard of beer in the left. Johnston is performing for her own camera, but this petticoat-flashing, cigarette-smoking persona was also an honest proclamation of an unconventional and unusually independent life. A photojournalist whose camera captured Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders, Isadora Duncan's dance troupe and a clutch of US presidents, she travelled alone and remained – as euphemistically as you might care to read it – unmarried. Paula

Rego borrowed something of Johnston's spread-knee'd, tobacco-puffing persona for her spiritual self-portrait *The Artist in Her Studio* (1993).

Smoking's transgressive associations with modernity and independence were, at the turn of the 20th century, a badge of pride for white women of status. This was not a performance of modernity available to women of colour and others for whom hard work was a birth-right rather than an aspiration. In Édouard

Manet's *Plum Brandy* (c. 1877), the young sitter's ungloved hands and unlit cigarette mark her out as a working-class woman. She is often assumed to be inviting the approach of a man with a lit match (indeed, she is often assumed to be a prostitute). We might just as well assume that she is happy sitting down alone at the end of a hard day's work – like Mckinney's women, she seems comfortably lost in her own thoughts.

Ellen Andrée, the model for *Plum Brandy*, is one of the many female figures that Lisa Brice has liberated from the canvases of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists and used to populate her world of painting, drinking, resting – and invariably smoking – modern women. Brice's women wield the paintbrushes of creative power and drag on the cigarettes of bohemian abandon. They gaze with blank eyes that deny access to their interior lives – you can look, but you are barred from participation in their world. None of Brice's women invite the approach of a man with a lit match.

In their former incarnations they were models – actresses, prostitutes and other working women – performing roles marked out for them by painters who paid for their time (and often shared their beds). In Brice's hands they are permitted the repose, self-determination and creative agency that gender, class and race placed out of reach in their own time. Their cigarettes send licks and curls up the surface of the canvas in a rhythmic pattern. Tendrils spill through half-open doors. In Brice's world without men, as in Mckinney's nocturnal interiors, these glowing tips and gauzy emissions point to pleasure, self-reliance and reverie, but also to inspiration. The smoke is more than incidental. A cigarette directs attention. It signals belated enjoyment of the modern bars and nightclubs that were closed off to respectable women of the late 19th century – among them the Impressionist painters Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot. These were spaces in which ideas were exchanged, alliances formed and human drama observed, between trails of tobacco smoke.

Hettie Judah is the curator of 'Acts of Creation: On Art and Motherhood', which is currently at VISUAL, Carlow (until 11 January 2026).

'Danielle Mckinney: Second Wind' is at Galerie Max Hetzler, London, until 1 November.

'Lisa Brice: Keep Your Powder Dry' is at Sadie Coles, Savile Row, until 20 December.

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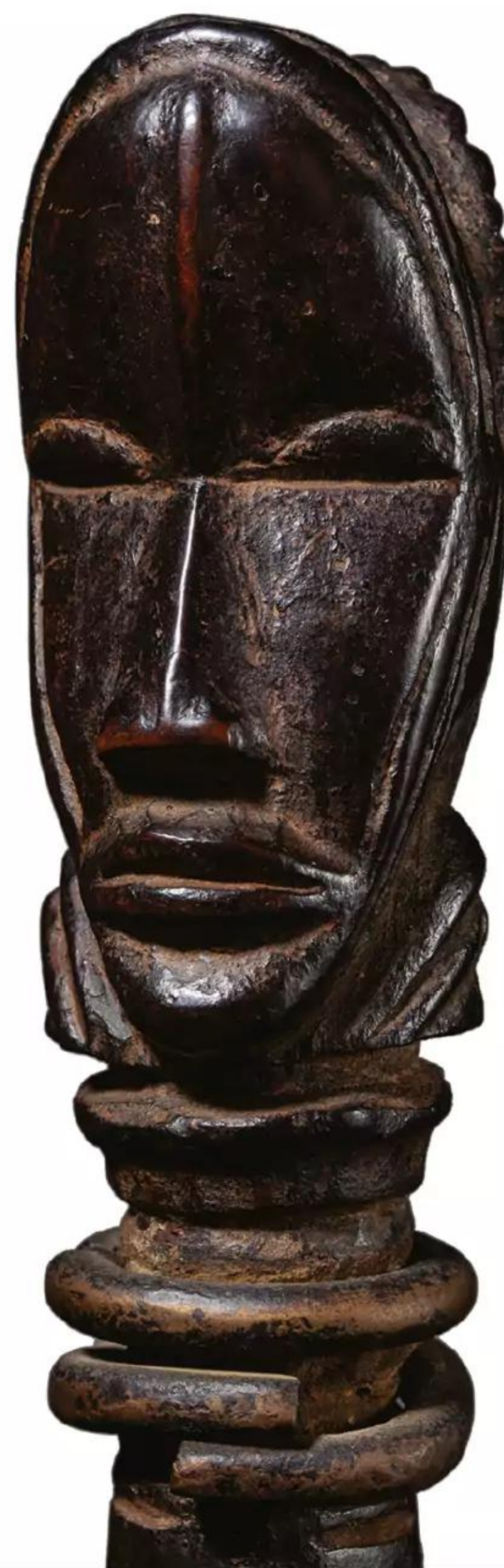
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Timeslip (1988/2025) by Derek Jarman (1942–94), Super 8 transferred to video, 9 mins 7 secs, as seen in 'Tilda Swinton – Ongoing' at the Eye Filmmuseum, Amsterdam

FATEMA AHMED goes in search of the artwork formerly known as Tilda Swinton

It is 30 years since Tilda Swinton lay in a glass box in the Serpentine Gallery in London. The performance, called *The Maybe*, required Swinton to sleep, or pretend to sleep, for eight hours a day, for seven days, while visitors peered at her or at other vitrines in the gallery, which the artist Cornelia Parker had filled with curios. She had subsequent lie-downs at the Museo Barracco in Rome in 1996 and at MoMA in 2013. By the time of the latter, the work was credited to Swinton alone and there were no other glass boxes to gawp at, but the greatest change since that first performance was in the degree of the actor's fame.

Until her stint in the Serpentine, most of the films Swinton had been in were directed by Derek Jarman, who had died the year before. In these and in the best of the rest, the actor (let's call her that for now) struck a consistently otherworldly note, even in *Caravaggio* (1986), in which she plays a Roman prostitute. In *Friendship's Death* (1987), written and directed by Peter Wollen, she played the first of many aliens or angels; in Sally Potter's *Orlando* (1992), she became the androgynous star of British art cinema. She has since become the androgynous star of international cinema, so much so that I'm

sometimes more surprised when she isn't in a film than when she is.

By agreeing to the making of 'Tilda Swinton – Ongoing' at the Eye Filmmuseum in Amsterdam and to enthusiastically taking part, the performer (to use the term she prefers) seems to be reckoning with her art-house ubiquity; she's certainly trying to make it serve a greater purpose. In conversation with the exhibition's curator, Vincent van Velsen, at the opening at the end of September, Swinton couldn't have been more engaging or deflecting about what that purpose might be. After an approach from the museum's previous



Phantoms, 2025, Apichatpong Weerasethakul (b. 1970), two-channel video installation, 9 mins 24 secs, as seen in 'Tilda Swinton – Ongoing' at the Eye Filmmuseum, Amsterdam

director, she was 'hesitant to the point of saying no for a couple of years', changing her mind only when she stopped thinking of an exhibition as 'something retrospective and finished and somehow dead' – full of clips of old films, old posters and old costumes – and started thinking about what use it could be; more specifically, 'What am I for?'

The answer she came up with was to present herself 'as a witness to collective work in film-making'. For her, the Eye Filmmuseum exhibition is a group show, one for which she has enlisted some regular collaborators. It begins, of course, with the work of Jarman and continues, more or less chronologically, with each section devoted to a different partnership. So here, too, are works made about or featuring Swinton by the directors Joanna Hogg, Luca Guadagnino, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Jim Jarmusch and Pedro Almodóvar, an installation-cum-performance piece by the fashion historian Olivier Saillard and portraits of Swinton dressed as her ancestors by the fashion photographer Tim Walker.

Those Scottish ancestors were undeniably posh – a fact neither Swinton nor the exhibition shies away from. In the characters she reincarnates for Walker, the military men make for the

most successful portraits; in the two-channel film by Weerasethakul, the camera follows a silent Swinton around her house in the Scottish Highlands, taking in along the way art and furniture that looks as if it wasn't bought yesterday, including a drawing by Sargent of 'my friend Mrs Swinton'. (The full-length portrait in oils of Tilda's great-grandmother Elsie hangs in the Art Institute of Chicago.)

Class isn't entirely absent in the best piece in the whole show: the recreation by one of Swinton's oldest friends, Joanna Hogg, of the mansion-block apartment in west London where Swinton lived by herself after university (reader of 2025, I wanted to weep!). Made with stage flats, the reconstruction consists of a narrow corridor – doors opening off on both sides – which leads to a sitting room. There is no furniture; this is a place of memory. The doors, left ajar, open to nowhere, but as you stop at each one, you can hear Swinton's voice itemising what was in each room or summing up how she used to feel there. If this avoids being portentous, that's largely down to the sound design, which keeps the voice low, weaving the different parts of Swinton's narration into a hum and forcing the listener to eavesdrop at each door. And more than any

of the other works, it feels like a piece that reflects its maker's interests as much as those of Swinton's.

There's no denying the earnestness here, however artful the displays (the section devoted to Jarman is a masterclass in how to make two scraps of Super 8 seem compelling). Despite Swinton's desire to show off the collaborative side of film-making, we seem to have swapped the director-as-auteur for the actor. What we don't get is Swinton's more raucous screen persona – the bolshie and bullying magazine editor she plays in Judd Apatow's *Trainwreck* (2015) is an absolute hoot, and the Coen brothers have also found a more knockabout performer in *Burn after Reading* (2008) and *Hail, Caesar!* (2016). But there's no denying the ambition on display here either. After its stretch in Amsterdam, the show is set to travel around the world. So, as well as art-house ubiquity, there will be 'Tilda Swinton – Ongoing', coming soon to a museum near you.

Fatema Ahmed is deputy editor of Apollo.

'Tilda Swinton – Ongoing' is at the Eye Filmmuseum, Amsterdam, until 8 February 2026 (eyefilm.nl).



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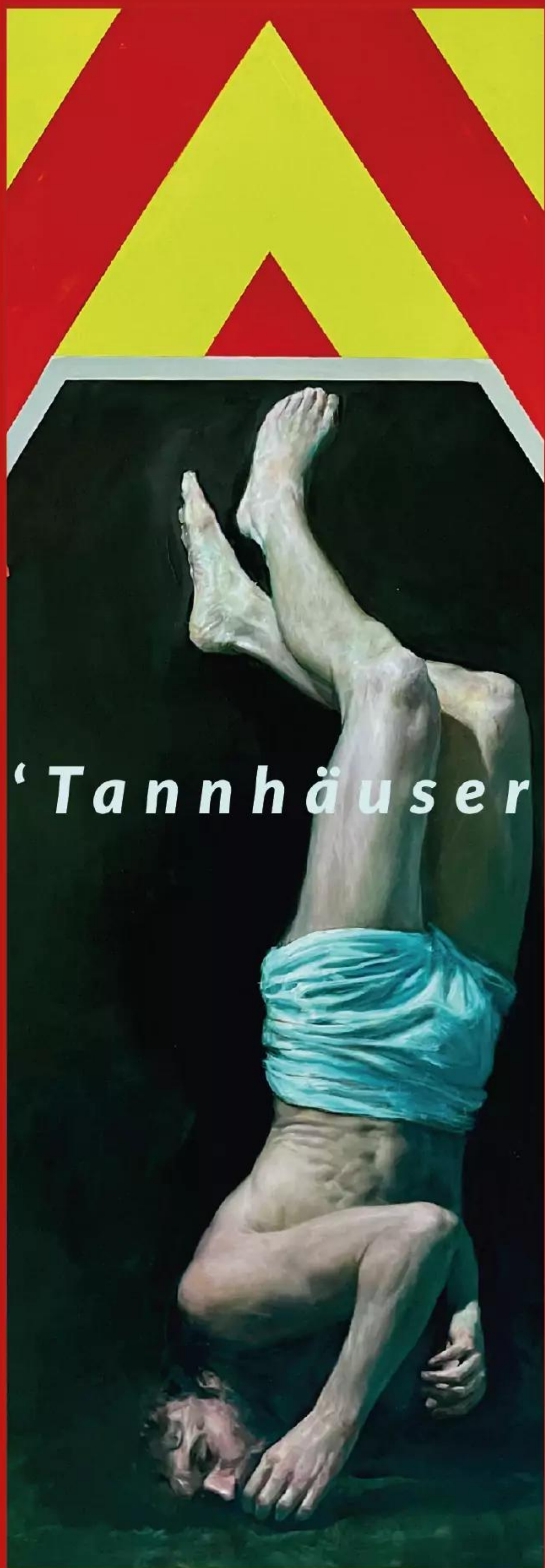
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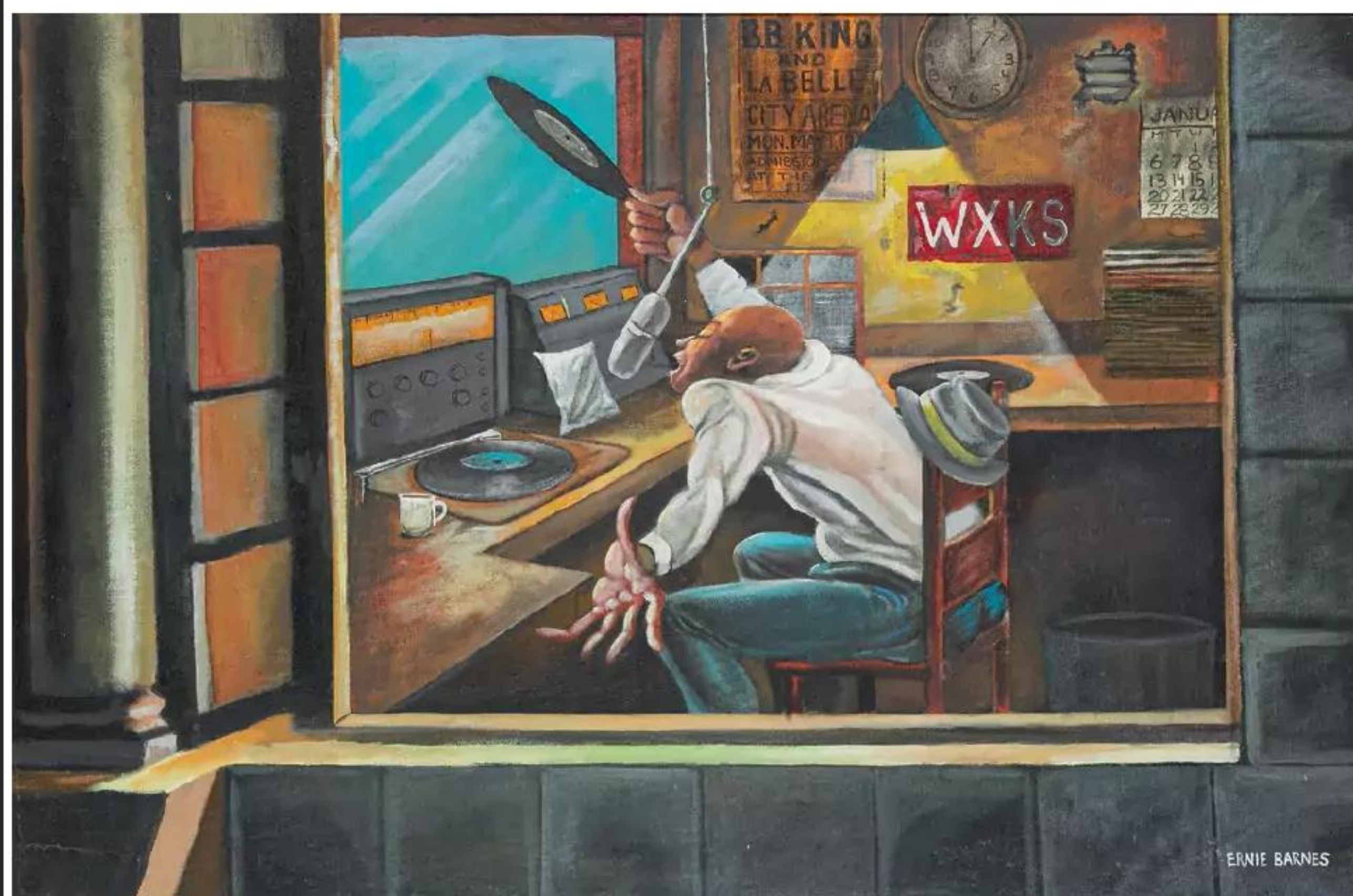
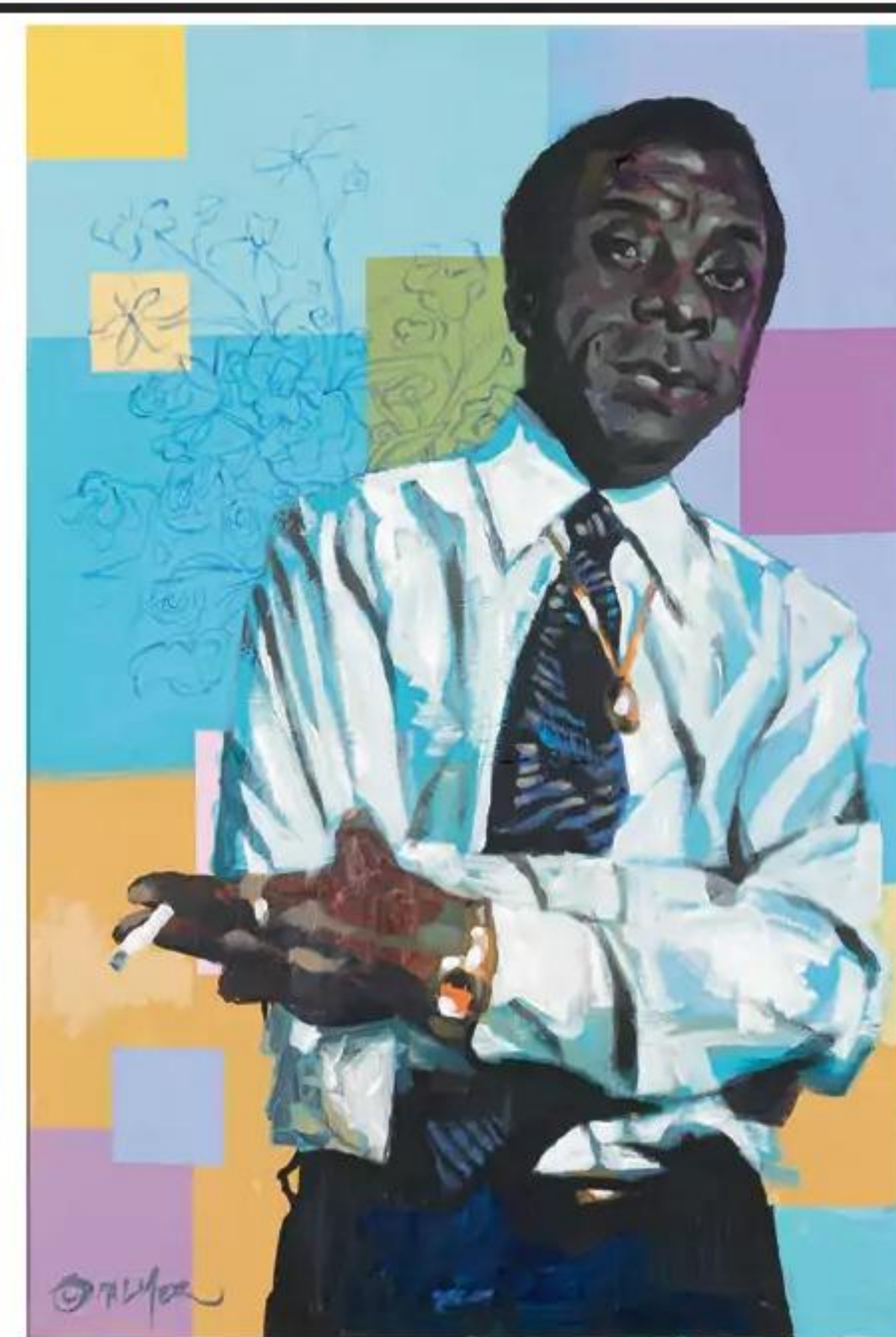
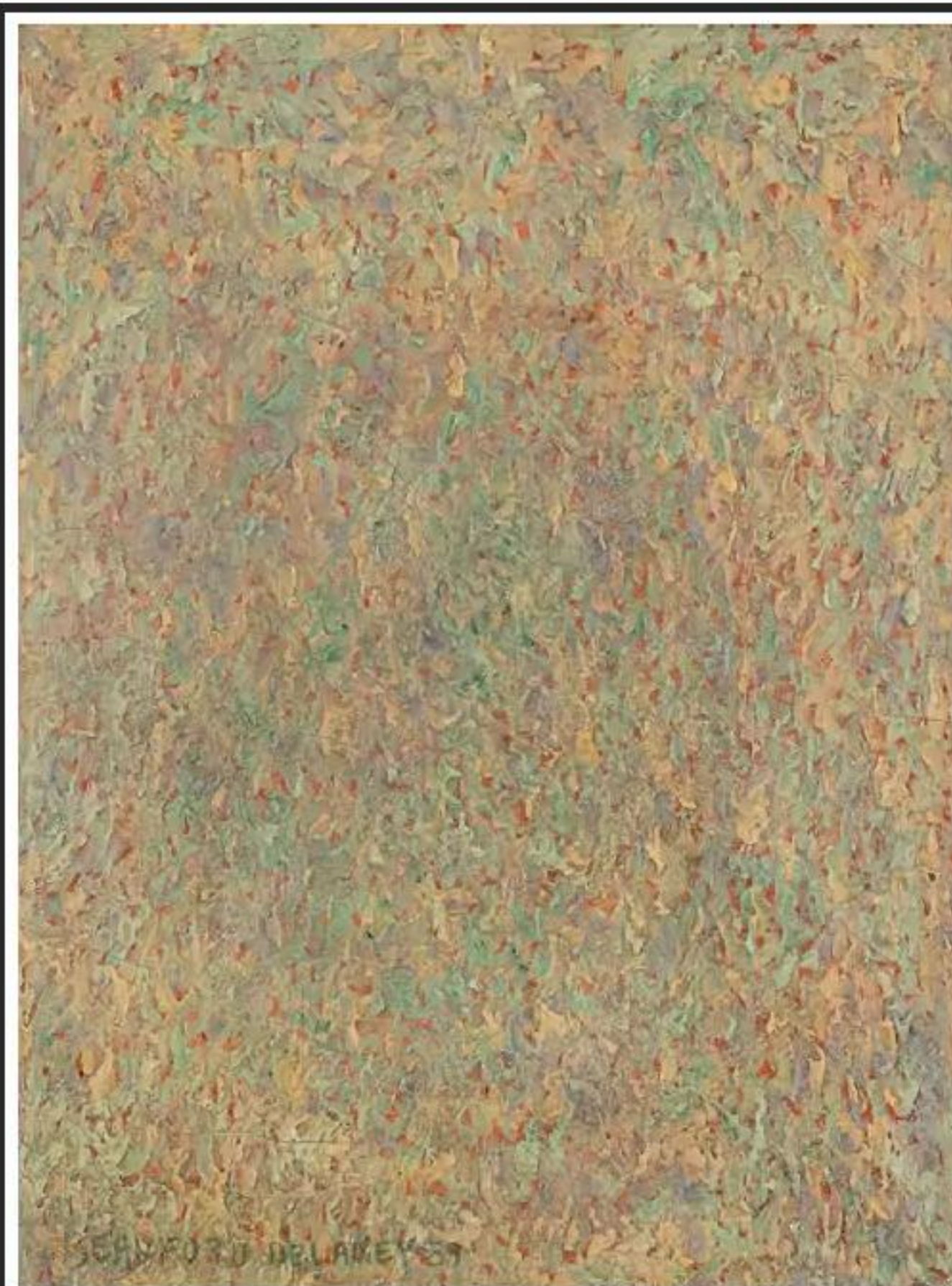
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The *Loves of the Gods* frescoes (1597–1604) in the Palazzo Farnese in Rome, by Annibale Carracci (1560–1609) and his studio

AGNES CRAWFORD delights in Carracci's frescoes at the Palazzo Farnese in Rome

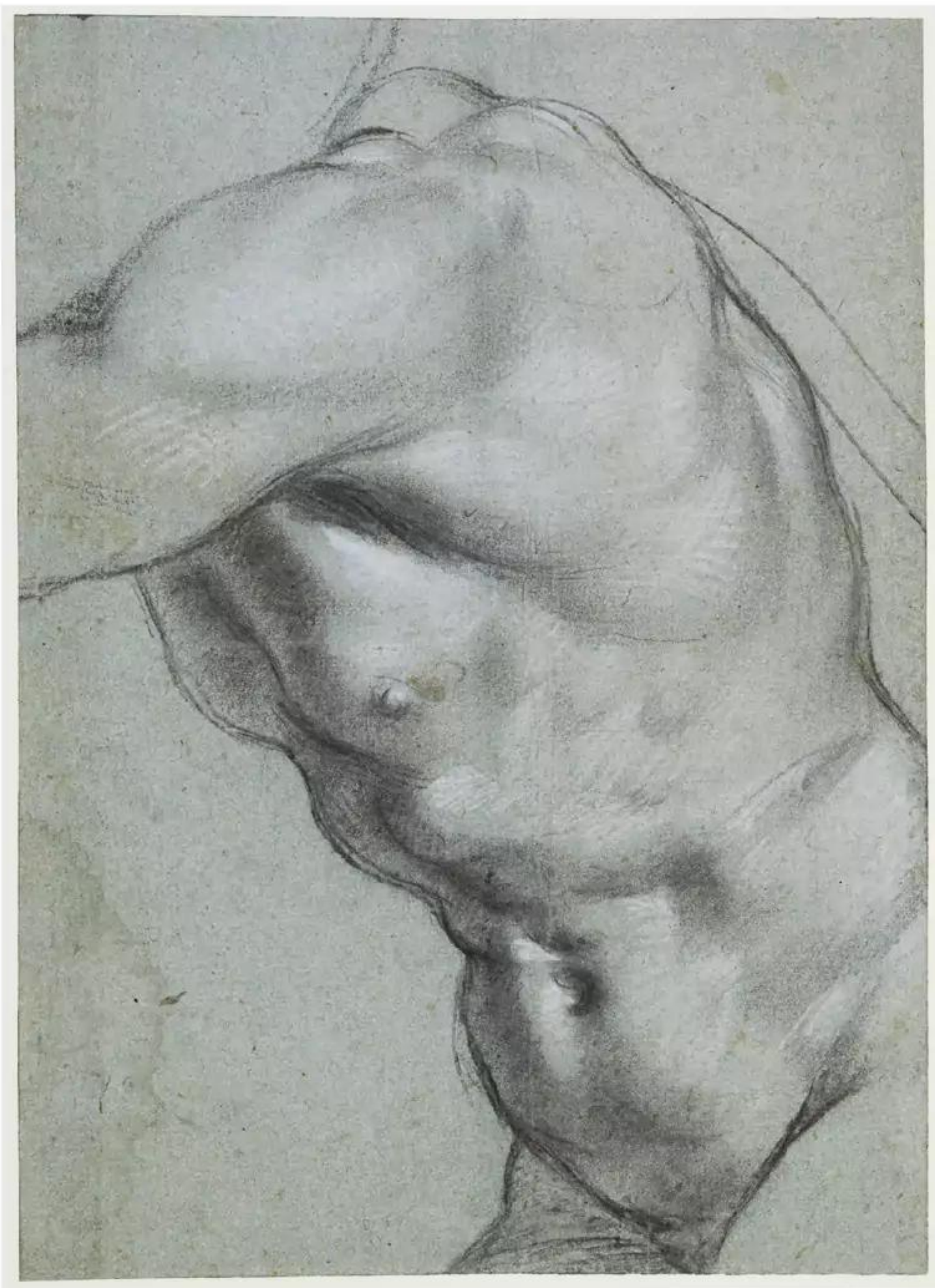
Simultaneously chaotic and cacophonous, elegant and erudite, Rome has been a city of contrasts since antiquity. At the Campo de' Fiori market today fruit and vegetable stalls still, just about, hold their own amid a battery of tat. Bawdily shaped novelty bottles of alarmingly luminous limoncello and lascivious aprons are, it seems, on the up. In the middle of the piazza a statue of Giordano Bruno, burned here as a heretic in 1600, gazes impassively over the scene under a crisp blue sky, as the first early morning chill of autumn sweeps away the torpor of late summer.

Just a square away from the cabbages and novelty aprons, Piazza Farnese is quite a different proposition: aristocratic calm overlooked by the vast Palazzo Farnese, the grandest of Renaissance palaces in Rome. The expansion of the palazzo, in a project first assigned to Antonio da Sangallo the Younger and then

inherited by Michelangelo, began when the Farnese were catapulted to the pinnacle of Roman society in 1534, with the election of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese as Pope Paul III.

A decade later Paul III began the Council of Trent and, while publicly addressing the criticisms levied by the Protestant Reformation, demonstrated exactly the sort of nepotism that had so angered Luther. In one particularly brazen move, the papal states were carved up to create the Dukedom of Parma and Piacenza, which he gave to his illegitimate son Pier Luigi; in another, several of his grandsons were created cardinals while they were teenagers. There is a phrase in Rome about throwing caution to the wind – *abbiamo fatto trenta, facciamo trentuno* (we've made 30, let's make 31) – that is said to have been Paul III's response when his advisors questioned his creation of an unprecedented number of cardinals on a single day.

All of which sets the scene for the grandeur of the Palazzo Farnese, home to the French Embassy to Italy since 1874. On the cusp of the 17th century, the gallery on the *piano nobile*, once home to part of the Farnese's rich collection of ancient statuary, was frescoed with the *Loves of the Gods* by Annibale Carracci and his studio. Carracci's masterpiece, which was commissioned by Paul III's great-great-grandson Cardinal Odoardo Farnese and has drawn comparisons with Giotto's frescoes at the Scrovegni Chapel and Raphael's in the Vatican *stanze*, is the focus of 'The Carracci Drawings: The making of the Galleria Farnese' at the Louvre from 5 November until 2 February 2026. Carracci's preparatory drawings for the monumental scheme – which here include 25 lent from the British Royal Collection – are arguably as celebrated as the finished work itself, and range from a small study of a left hand (probably the artist's) to a full-scale



Torso study, c. 1598–1600, Annibale Carracci, chalk on grey-blue paper, 32.1 × 23.1cm. Royal Collection Trust



Study of a satyr, c. 1597–1602, Annibale Carracci, chalk on blue paper, 37.9 × 23.5cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris

cartoon of the whole work. Reflecting Europe's delight in Carracci's achievement, Louis XIV commissioned a replica of the Galleria Farnese for the Tuileries Palace; newly restored remnants from this copy will be shown at the exhibition, while an immersive projection will bring the ceiling to a larger audience than can visit the *galleria* during the highly recommended, though limited, guided visits to the embassy in Rome.

The Farnese family traced its roots back to early medieval Lazio. The name may come from the *Castrum Farneti*, one of their earliest feudal possessions, named after the abundant *farnie*, the pedunculate or 'English' oaks found in the area close to Viterbo. Slow but inexorable social progress saw the Farnese rewarded for their loyalty to the Church, ultimately rising to the papacy. The final push was facilitated by Giulia 'la bella' Farnese, favoured mistress of Pope Alexander VI of the notorious Borgia family. Giulia's brother Alessandro entered the Roman Curia, it was said, by merit of her persuasive powers.

A century after the 'petticoat cardinal' had first entered the Curia, such gossip was a distant memory and the position of the Farnese at the pinnacle of Roman society was well established. Cardinal Odoardo was an enthusiastic custodian of the family's collection of ancient sculpture, harvested from excavations at the Baths of Caracalla and on the Palatine Hill. Thus the Farnese, with their

roots in Latium, emphasised their unwavering *romanitas*.

This collection was displayed in part beneath the ceiling which Odoardo commissioned Annibale Carracci to paint. Carracci was a Bolognese painter, co-founder with his brother and cousin of the *Accademia degli Incamminati* (Academy of the Progressives), which, among much else, promoted life drawing in defiance of papal prohibition. Carracci had worked at Parma, where he came into contact with the court of Ranuccio, the fourth Duke and Odoardo's brother. The cardinal thus summoned an artist previously unknown in the city, a cultural coup. The riotous *trompe l'oeil* of the vaulted ceiling – a jumble of painted friezes, medallions, and *quadri riportati* in their gilded frames – is bursting with tales of libidinous deities, all set in an illusionistic architectural framework and dotted with painted statuary. The central panel shows bawdy carousing as Bacchus and Ariadne are led on chariots in the enthusiastic direction of consummation, an ironic allusion to the many triumphant processions of Republican and Imperial Rome. The air of panto is added to by the leering, inebriated Silenus struggling to stay on his donkey on the right of the scene.

Juno and Jupiter, Diana and Endymion, Apollo and Hyacinth, Polyphemus and Galatea: the ceiling is a catalogue of mythological tales of lust and love in varying degrees of success. Above a window looking out towards the Tiber,

Anchises – punching well above his weight – seduces Venus. They are framed by monochrome illusionistic statues that belie the conceit by holding decidedly un-statue-like poses, as if a poorly trained regiment were fidgeting on parade. Carracci winks at us: they are pretending to be statues, he says, but they are not trying that hard. Anchises removes Venus's sandal, looking at her with hungry eyes; below, a stool bears an inscription from the opening lines of the *Aeneid*: *genus unde Latinum* ('from whence the Latin people'). The fruit of their liaison would be Aeneas, ancestor of Romulus. All this apparent frivolity serves to entertain, but also to emphasise the antiquity of Rome, and of the Farnese as a Roman family.

As Carracci carried out his sweated labour for Odoardo he was caught in a spiral of an ever greater and alcoholic melancholy that was at odds with the joyousness of his creation, and which would hasten his early death. Meanwhile, just beyond the palace's facade, past the fountains gushing in recycled ancient bathtubs carved from Egyptian granite – an Imperial flexing of muscles repurposed to advertise the Farnese's own empire – Bruno was burned as a heretic in the Campo de' Fiori. Two Roman squares; two very different aspects of the Roman Counter-Reformation.

Agnes Crawford offers private tours of Rome and can be found at understandingrome.substack.com.

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'The epitome of the modern civilised metropolis'

EDWIN HEATHCOTE admires the timeless Vienna interiors of Adolf Loos

Of all architectures the shopfront is probably the most vulnerable, the most sensitive to changes in fashion and finance. It might strike you as surprising, then, that the shopfronts designed by Adolf Loos in Vienna more than a century ago mostly survive almost intact. Or you might just think, well, that's Vienna, the city of astonishing stasis, of untouched cafes and rococo chambers unaltered for centuries.

Possibly, though, it is because they are perfect. Loos was a brilliant architect, a withering critic, a fine writer and, unfortunately, a paedophile. He was taken to court after being accused of sexually assaulting three young girls who sat for him as nude models. Only his connections and status in the city allowed him to walk free. For us it taints everything he did, of course, but his work has arguably lasted better than that of any other proto-modern architect and is still profoundly influential.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in his astonishing Kärntner Bar (or American Bar, 1907), a tiny cocktail joint with a coffered marble ceiling and mirrored walls, timber booths and banquettes and theatrically under-lit marble-topped tables. It is maybe my favourite interior anywhere. I can't think of anyone who has ever done it better. And it's not just me: there's a replica of the space in the senior common room at Trinity College Dublin, installed by architects de Blacam and Meagher in 1985.

Loos designed the bar as a riposte to the elaborate Secessionist and rococo whipped-cream cafes that stuffed Vienna's centre. He is now probably chiefly known for the title of an essay, 'Ornament and Crime' (1908), which is actually a far more nuanced text than generally realised. Loos suggested that the work of craftsmen in adorning their work was reasonable but that the application of decoration by the bourgeoisie was decadent. It is a surprise to some, then, that his interiors can be almost suffocatingly rich, not in surface decoration but in material and density of design. Here a coffered, layered marble ceiling creates a

compressive intimacy and something of a tomb about the place. Mirrors high up on the wall introduce an element of deceit, an uncertainty about depth and scale, expanding the tiny interior infinitely as if the space continued above a screen.

Loos's most controversial design was for the Goldman & Salatsch store on Michaelerplatz (1909–11). The controversy was precisely about its lack of adornment (one cartoonist portrayed it as a gridded drainhole cover). Emperor Franz Joseph apparently always used another entrance to his palace opposite just to avoid looking at it. But the interior, though less familiar, was equally intriguing: a rich, dark, veneer-encased series of interlocking, complex spaces stripped of the decorative appliqué characteristic of the era. The vitrines form a kind of glass cityscape, a Manhattan skyline of crystal, a city in a city. The interiors were destroyed in 1938 but later reconstructed.

His smaller stores are more intense, their scale amplifying the incredible richness of material and spatial composition. Nowhere is this better seen than at Knize (1909–13), also, remarkably, still functioning as it did in Loos's day. This gentlemen's outfitters clearly takes a lot from London. It is reminiscent of Savile Row's functional and elegant interiors (mostly now disappeared) or Jermyn Street's shops with their mix of gentlemen's club, showroom and workshop. Loos was an admirer of English tailoring – he cited its practicality and relative austerity, the codes of the suit, with the foppishness of Continental tailoring – and the interior of this remarkable store on Vienna's Graben feels very much like the interior of a wardrobe. Loos plays with surface here as a skilled tailor might play with fabric. The black granite on the front of the store is curved, creating something between a pair of columns framing the shopfront and a pair of curtains imparting a theatrical air. These are then pierced by two vitrines which undermine that solidity. It's a shopfront which looks arguably more radically contemporary than any contemporary counterparts and it survives intact.

Loos's most famous commercial interior did not survive. The Café Museum, with its stripped, white interior and shallow vaulted ceilings, often appears alongside Secessionist interiors by, among others, Josef Hoffmann (whose work Loos detested) and the cafe was close to the Secession building. But it was something very different. It came to be known as the Café Nihilismus, apparently much to Loos's delight. The black, punched windows in the white rendered facade (no sills or mouldings) appeared shocking at the time. Inside, the only adornment appears to be brass strips running across the vaulted ceiling but even these turn out to be electric conduits. The chairs here were basic Thonet models, like those in any cafe.

That most of these works survive is almost unbelievable. Shops are always the most ephemeral of designs. Yet here they are. You might suggest that some of that is due to Loos's impeccable taste and talent. Or you might suggest that it is because Vienna is a city in which things manage to endure – just look at the cafes which function perfectly well today, yet date back to the 1950s, 1920s or even 1890s. (Try to think of a single cafe in London that has survived even half that time.) It may also be that many of these institutions stay with single families for generations and become part of the social as well as cultural fabric of the city. It is also, perhaps, because Loos's designs were never exactly fashionable. They were always shot through with a dose of acerbic wit and impudence. They looked permanent and they manifested their own survival against the fripperies of their contemporaries. Probably it is all of these and it is a kind of miracle. Loos's commercial interiors are the epitome of the emerging modern civilised metropolis. The city as a place defined by solid, intriguing storefronts and complex, exquisite interiors which surprise, delight and seduce. The ephemerality of consumption refined into something like permanence.

Edwin Heathcote is the architecture and design critic of the Financial Times.



Knize men's outfitters in Vienna, designed 1909–13 by Adolf Loos and photographed by Photostudio Gerlach in 1930



Bloomsbury-inspired looks from the Dior Men's Spring/Summer 2023 ready-to-wear (left) and the Burberry Autumn/Winter 2014 ready-to-wear collection (right)

Photo: Victor Virgile/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images / photo: dpa picture alliance via Alamy

How will you contain your excitement as you wait for the opening of the exhibition 'Vanessa Bell & Duncan Grant', recently announced for November 2026 at Tate Britain? With more than 250 works, the show promises to take in 'vivid portraits, still lives, landscape paintings, decorative works on furniture, ceramics, textiles, and much more'. And it also includes what the press release calls an 'unmissable highlight': 'a once in-a-lifetime restaging of Duncan Grant's studio, relocated for the exhibition from their Sussex home, Charleston'.

One way to occupy yourself in the meantime would be to read Wendy Hitchmough's *Vanessa Bell: The Life and Art of a Bloomsbury Radical* (2025), then go and see 'Roger Fry', which opens this month at Charleston – where of course you could see the painted furniture and Grant's studio in its original location. While you're there, you could order a reproduction of Bell and Grant's *Famous Women Dinner Service* (50 plates for £12,000) and have them delivered in time for Christmas. Then you could cook your guests cucumber vichyssoise from *The Bloomsbury Cookbook: Recipes for Life, Love and Art*, and they could eat it off a tablecloth made from an Omega workshop fabric design (£85 per metre).

But perhaps you've had enough opportunities to look at paintings by Bell and Grant and their Bloomsbury associates? After all, there are hundreds of them in national collections, and the Tate exhibition will come hot on the heels of shows including 'Vanessa Bell: A World of Form and Colour' (2024), which opened at MK Gallery and transferred to Charleston, only closing in September; 'Dora Carrington: Beyond Bloomsbury' (2024) at Pallant House; 'Gardening Bohemia: Bloomsbury Women Outdoors' (2024) at the Garden Museum; and 'Beyond Bloomsbury: Life, Love and Legacy' (2021), which opened in Sheffield and then moved to York. And it doesn't feel like much time has passed since the major retrospective 'Vanessa Bell: 1879–1961', which opened at Dulwich Picture Gallery in 2017, and the blockbuster 'Virginia Woolf: art, life and vision' (2014) at the National Portrait Gallery.

On the literary front, the tide is likewise unstoppable. There's practically no aspect of Bloomsbury tastes and mores that hasn't been mined for the trade non-fiction market. Was Virginia Woolf imaginatively drawn to water and swimming? Olivia Laing has it covered, in *To the River*. Did she spend a bit of time in the countryside? Here's Harriet Baker with *Rural Hours*. Did she live in a square? Francesca Wade is on it, in *Square Haunting*. Did the Bloomsbury group wear clothes? Charlie

The cultural legacy of Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and co is undeniable. But with the worlds of decoration and fashion forever 'rediscovering' Charleston, and with yet another large show opening at Tate Britain next year, have we finally passed peak Bloomsbury?

Past its bloom?

BY MATTHEW SPERLING

Porter's *Bring No Clothes: Bloomsbury and the Philosophy of Fashion* is where we need to look for the answer. Doubtless an enterprising editor is somewhere commissioning the book on Bloomsbury and walking, the book about the pet cats, dogs and monkeys of Bloomsbury, the group biography about Bloomsbury polyamory, as we speak. Penelope Lively, already experiencing a surfeit of Bloomsbury when writing in the *LRB* in 1981, had a recommendation for publishers:

There is one possibly final Bloomsbury book that would be of value, not only to those besotted with the scene, but also to those who get inextricably mixed up about the members of the cast [...]: a 'Who's Who'. I envisage it providing not only brief biographical details but visual aids: charts that would indicate the state of various relationships at any given point in time [...] and for identification purposes a gallery of portraits extracted from the apparently inexhaustible supply of fuzzy photographs of Raymond and Saxon and Maynard and everyone having picnics or sitting in the garden in deckchairs.

It's not that the art, writing and design of the Bloomsbury group isn't often wonderful. The exhibitions and books that I mention above continue to show the richness and strangeness of some of the work that came out of this constellation of literary and artistic talents. On the day that I file this piece I'm teaching a seminar for first-year undergraduates on *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf's inexhaustibly brilliant novel of 1927, and it never misses or gets old. Even for students born in the late 2000s, even for students who have just left mainland China for the first time and have absolutely no

preconceptions about modernism or English culture, if any work of difficult 20th-century literature is likely to click with them, to make them feel the wonder and delight of a challenging and sophisticated work of art, it's this one. And the restoration of Vanessa Bell to the status of a major international figure in her own right, along with the recovery of Dora Carrington as a smaller but nonetheless important artist, has been an important critical project.

But doesn't all this take up a disproportionate amount of cultural space? When I look at the latest unnecessary critical edition of a Woolf novel that has already been edited and annotated dozens of times – or the proliferation of gift-shop reproductions and imitations of Bloomsbury lampshades and curtains; or a broadsheet feature on 'How to get the Charleston look in your own home'; or the *Vogue* photographs of Kate Moss lounging on a Charleston sofa, naked but for her cowboy boots and straw hat; or Cara Delevingne wearing Charleston-inspired Burberry on the runway – there's a part of me that longs for a bracing dose of the hard-edged modernism of Ezra Pound or Wyndham Lewis. It was Lewis who railed ceaselessly against the 'essential respectability' of the Omega workshop (a 'curtain and pincushion factory') and of what he called 'a small group of people which is of almost purely eminent Victorian origin, saturated with William Morris prettiness and fervour'. When I look at the interiors at Charleston, every panel and headboard and lampshade papered over or daubed with blowsy watercolours, every surface cluttered with stuff, I dream of white walls, modular bookshelves and tubular steel furniture. Whatever happened to 'Chuck Out Your Chintz'?

The anti-Bloomsbury arguments are easy to assemble. When Pound abused his hated

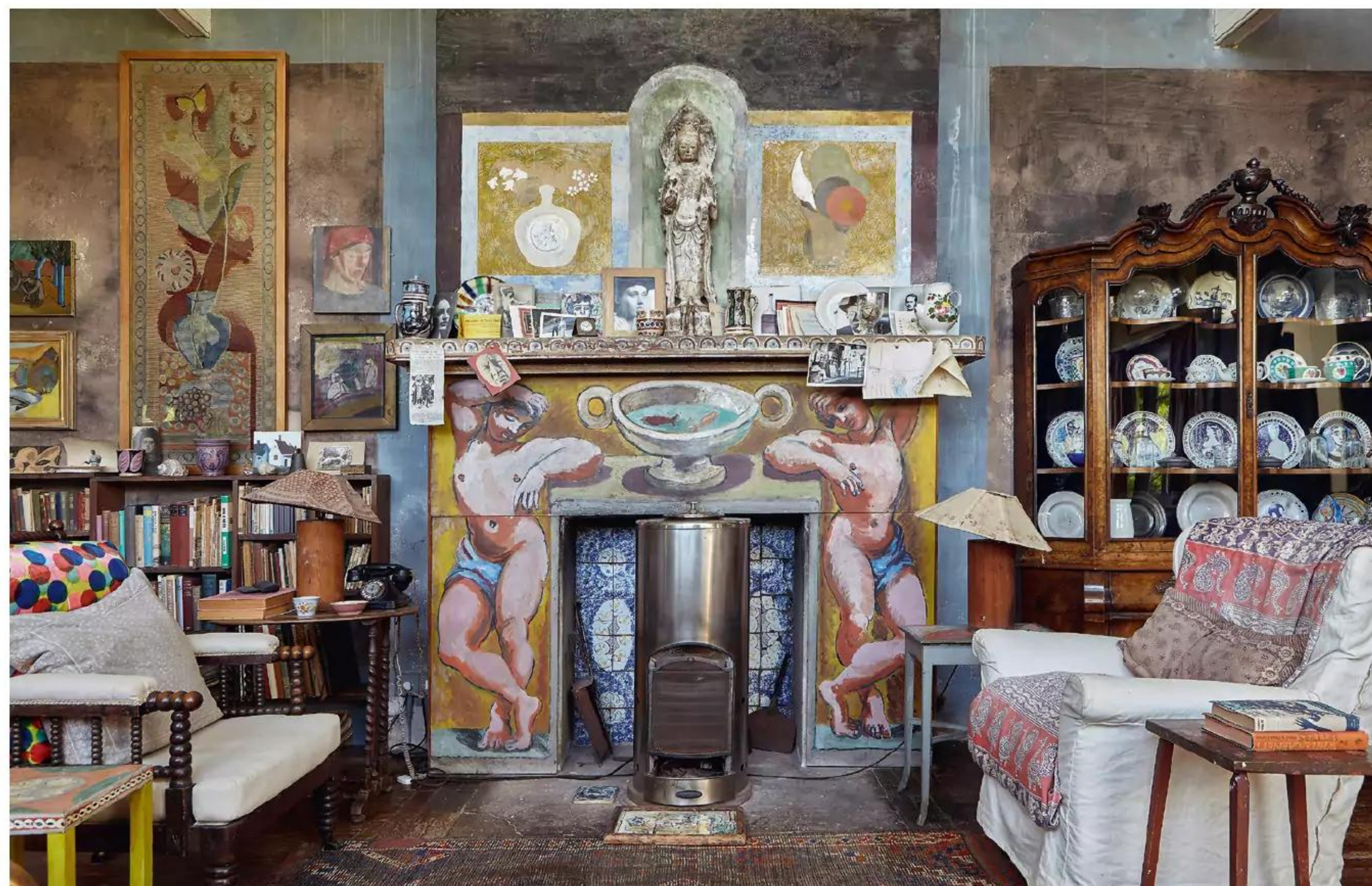
rivals as the ‘Bloomsbuggers’, or when the mid-century reviewer Keith Roberts famously called Vanessa Bell ‘essentially a lavender talent’, they might have expressed critical reactions stained by homophobia or sexism, but they put their finger on something important about the *annoyingness* of the Bloomsbury group. More fruitfully, this annoyance has been framed as a justified class-envy. For the Northumbrian modernist poet Basil Bunting, the annoying thing about Bloomsbury was that ‘they were all of that well-to-do middle class, bordering on country gentry who felt that if you couldn’t afford to live in Bloomsbury or Regent’s Park or some similar, desirable, but very expensive part of the world, well, poor devil, there wasn’t much to be expected from you.’

Bunting puts his finger on something crucial here: how the intensity and beauty of the Bloomsbury vision of life was underwritten by the desperate narrowness of its social outlook. Much of the most important recent critical thinking about Bloomsbury, galvanised by Alison Light’s superb *Mrs Woolf and the Servants* (2007), has been dedicated to confronting the class-obliviousness of the Bloomsbury group.

Resenting posh people is practically a British national pastime, so perhaps one shouldn’t indulge in it too much. But the Bloomsbury group really do invite it. Consider the Dreadnought Hoax of 1910. This is the time when Duncan Grant, Virginia Woolf and others dressed up as the Abyssinian royal family, with robes and turbans, costume jewellery, stick-on beards and black face paint, and tricked their way into a tour of the HMS *Dreadnought*, convincing the naval officers they were African by saying ‘Bunga bunga!’ to show their admiration for the warship.

Or consider the wealth of evidence in Light’s book about Woolf and her circle’s treatment of and attitudes towards their domestic staff, which veered between fascination, fear, revulsion and co-dependency. For the Bloomsbury group, the ‘servant problem’ meant how to keep them on a short leash and stop them getting too uppity while still getting them to do all the cooking, cleaning and child-rearing for you. When Woolf’s long-term servant Lottie asked for a pay rise in 1917, her first response was not to consider whether she was being a fair employer but to muse in her diary: ‘The poor have no chance; no manners or self-control to protect themselves with; we have a monopoly of all the generous feelings.’

Of course, it doesn’t matter whether they were snobs or casual racists or whether they treated their servants poorly. They’ve all been dead for decades, and making art and literature has nothing to do with being a morally



The studio at Charleston in East Sussex, decorated by Duncan Grant, Vanessa Bell and Roger Fry

admirable person. The more important questions are: first, did the self-confessed snobbism, the insularity, the attitude towards the poor, set a limit upon the artistic achievements of Bloomsbury? And second, what are the consequences today of giving such a central position to work that is bound up in so many ways with generational wealth and deference to the tastes and tacit assumptions of the upper-middle classes?

In answer to the first question, I would say that it probably did. Rebecca Birrell’s reading of Bell’s painting of *The Kitchen at Charleston* (c. 1943), in her book *This Dark Country: Women Artists, Still Life and Intimacy in the Early Twentieth Century* (2021), suggests how this might have worked:

Grace is in the kitchen, the table laid with vegetables she will go on to wash, chop and cook. Hours of work are ahead of her, but none of the difficulties of those impending tasks are evident, or even hinted at: the surfaces are clean, the crockery unused, her apron and dishcloth unsullied, her unmarked hands hovering over an apparently empty mixing bowl. [...] Grace is one domestic object amongst a room of others, her body useful and orderly, her subjectivity entirely collapsed into her labour. [...] Yet, for all the eerie disregard that attends the representation of Grace, the image remains one of absolute harmony – a smug kitchen pastoral.

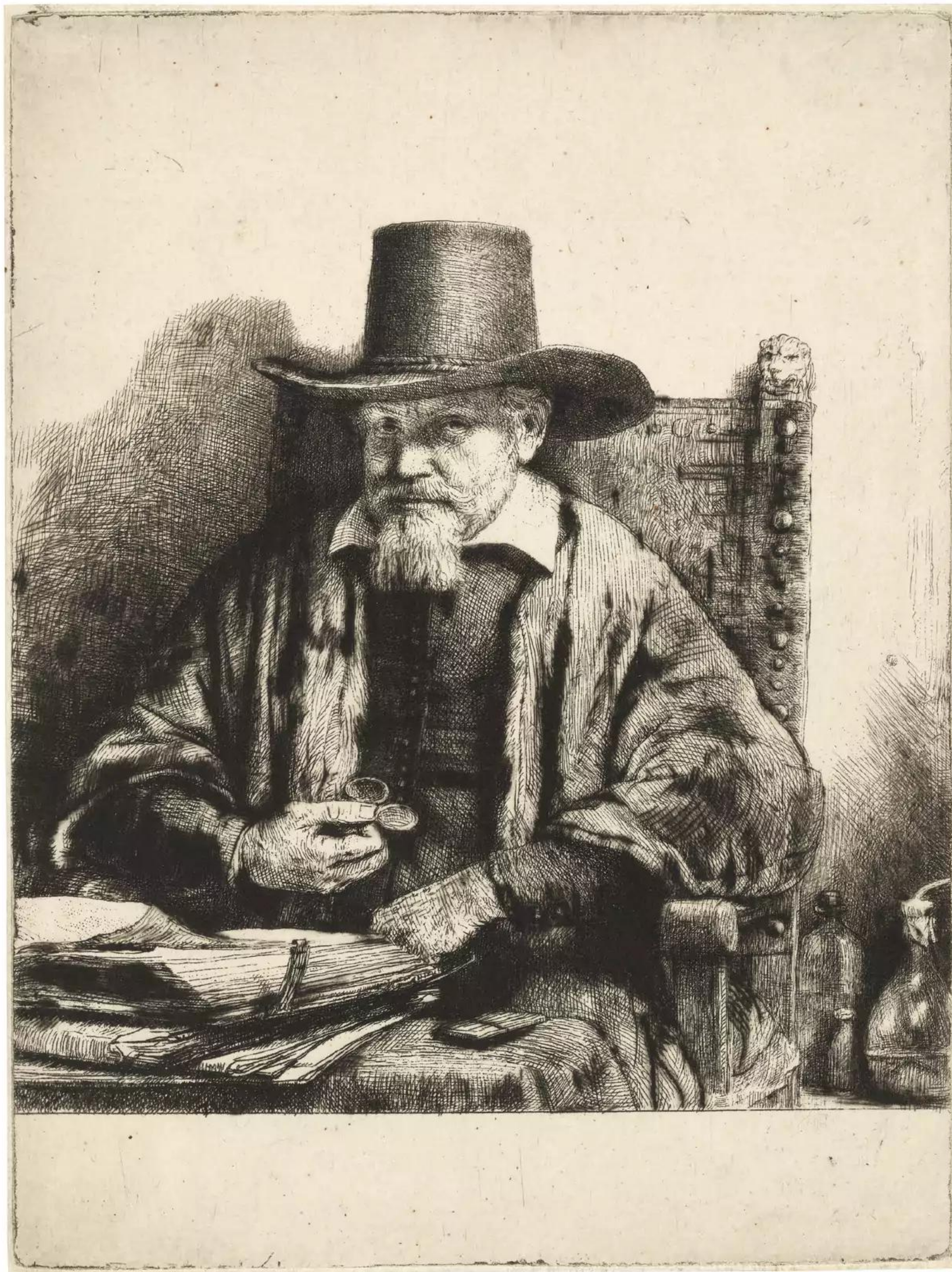
In a study of Bell that is full of loving appreciation for her work and spirit, Birrell is still alert to the exclusions and limits of her imagination. ‘Vanessa was only able to live as she pleased

through instrumentalising the labour of other women,’ she writes – and consequently the work itself, the understanding of people and the world that it expresses, is arguably limited by this disregard for the lives of most of the population.

In answer to the second question, I would say that today’s redoubled Bloomsburymania probably is a bit of a backward force in the culture. We had surely already reached peak Bloomsbury in the 2010s, when Sue Limb’s superb BBC Radio 4 sitcom *Gloombsbury* ran for five series, giving us the adventures of Ginny Fox and Vera Sackcloth-Vest in place of Woolf and Vita Sackville-West. By the time the anonymous satirical Twitter account ‘Bougie London Literary Woman’ was launched in 2018, with a detail from Vanessa Bell as its banner image, peak Bloomsbury had been surpassed (‘Giving myself the treat of a pilgrimage to Charleston. If my last visit is reliable indication, by the time I reach the bedrooms I expect to be so overcome with *joie de livres* that I shall be openly weeping.’). The strength of the parody (later revealed to be written by Imogen West-Knights and an unnamed friend) was that Bougie London Literary Woman was essentially a deadpan recitation of the sway that the soft-bohemianism and upper-middle-class style choices of Bloomsbury still hold in the London literary world. But in the 2020s, we are replaying this Charleston-worship having lost sight of the fact that it was ever a joke. We get new Bloomsbury retrospectives so that we can rediscover things that have never been out of sight for a moment. Can we not just do something else for a while?

Matthew Sperling is the author of two novels, Astro turf (2018) and Viral (2020).

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Dinner sanctum

At London's venerable members' clubs, food and art are existentially linked, writes **SOPHIE BARLING**

Dinner at the Garrick, and salmon and cucumber is a combination to be found slipping down the shirtfronts of many of the club's members. The pink-and-green striped Garrick tie – which enjoyed some prominence last year during the *Guardian's* campaign for admission of women members – is only respectable, dedicated wearers feel, when embellished with splashes of gravy. Diners looking to colour-coordinate their neck attire with what's on their plates are spoiled for choice: to start they could go for Devonshire crab cocktail with dashi jelly, apple and samphire; or potted shrimps with marinated cucumber; or that ketchup-laced retro classic, prawn cocktail with Marie Rose sauce, here served with avocado and lime.

Next comes ample opportunity for gravy-spatulating: Yorkshire grouse with game chips and bread sauce; grilled Devonshire lamb cutlets; calf's liver, fillet steak – the list goes on.

As at many of the older London gentlemen's clubs, the main dining room at the Garrick is known as the coffee room – a hang-over from the city's 17th-century coffee houses, the ancestors of the private members' club. And if there is still a sense, as a female diner, of having breached the defences to be sitting in this Italianate palazzo in the West End, the greater pleasure is in taking in the spectacle of what hangs on the walls. Founded in 1831 in honour of the actor-manager David Garrick (1717–79), the club has accumulated the world's largest collection of art relating to the history of British theatre. Pride of place at one end of the coffee room are two large pendant paintings commissioned by Garrick in 1762 from Johan Zoffany: they show the celebrated actor, his wife and companions enjoying the grounds of his Thames-side retreat at Hampton, which featured a temple to Shakespeare designed for Garrick by Robert Adam. The club bought the paintings at Sotheby's in 2011 for £6m, a splurge made possible by its 'Pooh money' – £32m from the sale of the rights to the works of A.A. Milne, a former member, to Disney.

A good chunk of the Garrick's collection – which includes many theatrical portraits by Zoffany and Samuel De Wilde, who had his studio nearby at Covent Garden – was inherited from the actor Charles Mathews (1776–1835),



The coffee room at the Garrick Club, London

who would buy pictures of great actors in character (Garrick included) for inspiration when he was preparing for the same role. Thespian club members continue to benefit: one of a brace of actors in the downstairs bar when I was there recently looked strikingly like a nearby portrait of the actor-manager Sir Squire Bancroft by Hugh Goldwin Riviere.

Casting an eye over the decorations while putting on the nosebag, as that inveterate club man Bertie Wooster might have put it, comes highly recommended in *The London Club: Architecture, Interiors, Art*, a new book with texts by Andrew Jones and photographs by Laura Hodgson. For some of the 46 establishments it surveys, food and art are existentially linked. Dinners, Jones writes, were the 'initial raison d'être' of the Sketch Club, set up in 1898. 'Its founders broke away from the Langham Sketching Club over heated arguments as to whether a hot dinner was a more appropriate post-sketch repast than bread and cheese.' One version of the Beefsteak Club's origin story, meanwhile, goes back to the 1730s, when the landscape artist and scene painter George Lambert would grill steaks in his studio at the Covent Garden Theatre. By the 1750s the 'Sublime Society of Beefsteaks' had become a weekly steak-eaters' club whose members included William Hogarth (lending another layer, perhaps, to his 1748 painting *O the Roast Beef of Old England*). A Georgian gridiron hanging on a wall inside the club today is said to be Lambert's and has given the club its motif,

outlined on china (with the motto 'Beef and Liberty'), furniture and even the rooms' Arts and Crafts lanterns. Keep your eyes peeled and you'll see it carved into the club's unassuming facade near the National Portrait Gallery.

If the Beefsteak is held by many to serve the best food of all London clubs, it was the Reform that comfortably boasted that accolade in the 19th century. The architect Charles Barry designed the club's vast kitchens in collaboration with its famed French chef, Alexis Soyer. They incorporated the first town gas-fired stoves in Britain, cooling and heating boxes, steam-powered dumbwaiters and custom-made furniture such as a 12-sided prep table. With such a talent in such a kitchen, cooking

as art form was inevitable. As Jones notes, 'The 2.5 foot meringue pyramid he designed for a banquet to welcome Egypt's Ibrahim Pasha in 1846, and its accompanying Gâteau Britannique à l'Amiral, a cake in the form of a giant man-of-war carrying English and Egyptian flags and filled with a cargo of frozen peach mousse, must surely count as some of the great structures in the history of London club architecture.' While Soyer catered to old-school English tastes – his boiled beans and bacon were beloved of Thackeray – his signature Côtelettes à la Reform, still served at the club, defy categorisation. These breaded cutlets are served with a sauce that includes tongue, truffle and gherkins, garnished with strips of boiled egg white.

Such dishes, of course, can have a soporific effect. In the Library at Brooks's, pillows are balanced on the back of a Chesterfield for those in need of a post-prandial snooze, overlooked by portraits of Dilettanti by George Knapp (pun intended?). Other club furniture, however, testifies to the less desirable consequences of overindulgence: weighing chairs and gout stools contribute to the sense of some of these places as 'interactive' museums of Georgian and Victorian London – Thomas Rowlandson prints in three dimensions. There's something to be said for a packet of Tayto crisps at the Mildmay Club.

The London Club: Architecture, Interiors, Art, by Andrew Jones and Laura Hodgson, is published by ACC ART Books.

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Breaking the bank

Drinkers must hammer their way through a protective casing to get at these £37,000 bottles of whisky, writes **CHRISTINA MAKRIS**

Great whisky is about patience; every dram is the result of numerous decisions. There are seven essential stages to the process. First, the barley is malted and milled to free the starches. Second, mashing, where hot water breaks down the starch into sugars. Third, fermentation in washbacks, in which yeast turns those sugars into a liquid called wash. Next comes distillation in copper pots, before maturation in casks. Then, for blended whiskies, there is marrying, where the maker mixes the liquid from several vessels to create a final product. Last, the whisky is reduced, filtered and bottled.

Japanese makers adapted and refined this method in the first half of the 20th century. Commercial whisky production in Japan began in 1923 when Shinjiro Torii opened what is now the Yamazaki distillery. He hired a young chemist who had trained in Scotland, Masataka Taketsuru, to establish the distillation programme. Taketsuru – now known as the founder of Japan's whisky industry – invented a method that fused Scottish technique with Japanese precision. When he founded his own distillery in 1934, he chose to build it in the town of Yoichi because it reminded him of Scotland.

The result is a tradition defined by balance and meticulous attention to raw materials. The use of native mizunara oak and the seasonal variations in Japan's climate produce unmistakably local notes, such as sandalwood, incense and coconut. But if Japanese whisky demonstrates how a tradition born thousands of miles away can be translated and recast into something new, the Scottish distillery Glenrothes, founded in 1879, has taken inspiration from Japanese ceremony and ritual for its latest product, The 51. This blend is drawn from two oak casks: one has the soft perfumed character of the

wild orchids that bloom on the estate; the other has a depth and richness that comes from the soft water from the distillery spring and long ageing in sherry casks. Aged for 51 years and priced at £37,000, The 51 is complex and vibrant: its tasting notes include succulent watermelon, the scent of fresh peach kernels and almonds, notes of rose oil, bergamot and black tea leaves, with base notes of sandalwood and a creamy almond finish. Master whisky maker Laura Rampling believes that the project is 'a testament to those rare moments in whisky making when patience, nature and craft align perfectly'.

The 51 is encased in a solid Jesmonite column that the owner must shatter with a hammer to access the hand-blown decanter. The shards are returned to the distillery to be repaired by five artists and craftspeople: Yuko Gunji, Kira Smith, Joseph and Maiko Anderson-Story, Chiara Lorenzetti and Iku Nishikawa, all of whom are trained in *kintsugi*, the art of repairing broken pottery with *urushi* (lacquer) dusted with powdered gold. The

technique, which has roots in Japanese tea ceremonies, treats an object's fractures as part of its story, rather than flaws to be hidden; here, the fragments are repaired with precious metal and repurposed into a vase for orchids.

Given the whisky's rarity – only 100 bottles are available – it is unlikely that collectors would be inclined to hide it away. Nonetheless, according to Jonny Fowle, global head of whisky at Sotheby's, 'Unlike wine, whisky can be stored on collectors' shelves in their homes' rather than in professional storage, 'meaning that whisky lends itself to extravagant display more readily than other similar products'. 'There are certain whiskies,' he says, 'which cross over [...] to being works of art in themselves.'

The relationship between breaking and mending perhaps protects against straightforward commodification. The 51 requires the collector to participate in the steps of experiencing the drink by smashing, returning and receiving a 'new' repaired piece. In doing so, the bottle becomes a portal, a conversation between maker and owner about patience, imperfection and attention. And just like a tea ceremony, it requires the user's participation to activate the ritual.

Both Japanese and Scottish traditions reward the temperament of slowness and attention to taste. Be it the careful cut of a pot still, the long patience of a cask, or the mindful rejoining of broken shards with gold, good whisky and good craft ask you to taste and wait. The 51 is an extravagant reminder of that lesson – a dram that is at once product and provocation, a bottle that insists the collector be mindful of the making as well as the owning.

Christina Makris's Art in Vineyards: Cultivating Culture is published by Skira.



A bottle of Glenrothes' The 51 encased in a Jesmonite column (left), and a vase made from its broken shards repaired using *kintsugi* (right)



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This page: The front
of the new Studio
Museum building

Opposite: David
Hammons's *Untitled*
flag (2004) hangs on
the facade of the old
building





New look

Since its founding in the 1960s, Harlem's celebrated Studio Museum has sustained generations of African-American artists. After a seven-year hiatus, with a new building, it's set to do so once again

BY RACHEL HUNTER HIMES



Untitled (Paris Series), 1987, Ed Clark (1926–2019), acrylic on canvas, 188 × 207cm. Studio Museum in Harlem

It feels like a long time that we've been without the Studio Museum in Harlem. Founded to address the lack of New York City institutions dedicated to art created by members of the African diaspora, it has been missed these past seven years. It's true that Black artists have recently achieved a presence that could have only been imagined at the time of the museum's creation. While it was closed, artists whose careers were launched at the Studio Museum, such as Kerry James Marshall and Julie Mehretu, set records at auction. The role of the Studio Museum, however, has been not only to sustain Black artistic production but also to challenge easy definitions and demarcations of 'Black' art – by the art market or elsewhere – by expanding our sense of the themes, topics and audiences it addresses.

Finally, after delays caused by the pandemic and unforeseen issues with the site, the museum will reopen this month, for the first time in a splendid, purpose-built new home. The new building was funded by a capital campaign that raised more than \$300 million (almost double the initial estimate) from individuals, foundations and corporate sponsors, and from the City of New York. As the museum prepares to enter a new era, its director and chief curator, Thelma Golden, is determined to hold its history close. 'I see our building project as an inflection point, one that lets us honour the past and allows that past to inform how we talk about the museum now and how we think about the institution's future.'

Established in September 1968, the Studio Museum has no single founder. Neither a monument to a wealthy

donor nor a storehouse for a prestigious collection, it reflects instead a moment of art world organising. During the '60s, activists across New York called for Black leadership at arts institutions, fought to have the work of Black artists displayed in museums and galleries and founded their own organisations and institutions when the mainstream art world fell short. Between the Civil Rights and Black Power movements and amid progress and reaction – in the same year a federal ban on housing discrimination was passed and Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated – a group of artists, activists, educators and business leaders saw a need and moved to address it. They founded an everyday museum, a museum in and of its community. Their goal was not only to show work by artists of African descent but also to help bring that work into being. From the start, a residency programme put the 'studio' in the museum, providing artists with funding and a space to work in Harlem, a global capital of Black culture. Young community members worked with the artists-in-residence as apprentices or trained in the museum's film unit.

The Studio Museum first opened in a rented second-floor space on a mixed-use block, above a liquor store and a beauty salon. When it moved in 1982, it was to a new site a few blocks away, a former bank that had also seen life as a furniture store. Renovations in the 1980s and '90s updated the building, although its capacities remained limited. Galleries were cramped, but the intimacy of the space wasn't always a drawback; events felt like well-attended house parties. The museum's expanding



ME
WE

Give Us a Poem, 2007,
Glenn Ligon (b. 1960), neon
and sintra PVC, 192.1×188.6cm.
Studio Museum in Harlem



Lawdy Mama, 1969, Barkley L. Hendricks (1945–2017), oil and gold leaf on canvas, 136.5 × 92cm. Studio Museum in Harlem

Photo: Adam Reich; courtesy Estate of Barkley L. Hendricks/Jack Shainman Gallery, New York; © Barkley L. Hendricks



Blue Rain Mecklenburg, 1987, Romare Bearden (1911–88), collage on board, 76.2 × 101.6cm. Studio Museum in Harlem

mission, however, clearly required more. Golden sees the new space as both a return and a new beginning. ‘The museum exists in the same place, as we move back into 144 West 125th Street,’ she says, ‘but it is wholly new, with an entirely new physical space.’

Adjaye Associates, which also designed the National Museum of African American History and Culture, has created a striking open facade, a cluster of stacked frames, windows and doors in dark grey concrete. Visitors enter a lofty interior, the heights of which are punctuated by the rhythmic geometric forms of an ascending staircase, clad in black terrazzo, and the descending ‘reverse stoop’ – a massive set of steps in warm wood dropping away from the front doors. The stoop and its adjoining ground-level cafe, both free to enter, reflect an institutional desire to dissolve the barriers between the museum and the life of the street.

The galleries, studios and other spaces wrap around a central light well, with the compact, vertical design and efficient ordering of space recalling the kinds of buildings New Yorkers call home. The overall design is inspired by the built environment of Harlem and its bustling indoor and outdoor spaces. First, there’s the street. Unlike the art museums in the quiet preserves of the Upper East Side – the Met, perched atop four metres of stairs, or the Guggenheim, hovering over Central Park – the Studio Museum nestles in the middle of its Harlem block, where vendors make their living and where people congregate at all hours. Then there’s sanctuary. In the galleries, floor-to-ceiling

windows look on to the steeples of Harlem’s many churches, spaces of spiritual solace and social action. Finally, the stage, an acknowledgement of the central place of the performing arts in Black culture and of historic Harlem venues such as the nearby Apollo Theater, is created in the doubling of the ‘reverse stoop’ as performance space.

What constitutes ‘Black’ art? What does it mean to show Black culture and where should it be seen? The museum has been shaped by these difficult debates – and continues to shape them today. The group who founded the Studio Museum, several of whom held roles at MoMA and the Met, initially envisioned it as a meeting place for New York’s Black and white art worlds. Local, Black-led cultural organisations such as the Harlem Cultural Council felt that Harlem needed investment in local initiatives more than it needed a mainstream museum attracting downtowners. They were rightly wary of institutional encroachment – Columbia University had recently tried to build a gymnasium on public land in a Harlem park – and concerned that the new museum would do nothing for the neighbourhood’s many artists. Debates extended to the work on view, with proponents of Afrocentric, politically informed art arguing that the museum’s commitment to showing abstract and formally experimental work amounted to an abdication of its responsibility to inspire social change.

These early challenges prompted a decisive turn towards the Harlem community, led by the museum’s



Narokan, 1965, Tom Lloyd (1929–96), aluminium, light bulbs and plastic laminate, 29 × 47 × 12.5cm. Studio Museum in Harlem

second director, Edward S. Spriggs, who took over from Charles Inniss in 1969. Debates over the themes and topics the museum should address have informed an exhibition programme that emphasises complexity, diversity and differences of opinion within Black art and culture. Although in 1977 a name change (to the Museum of African American Art) was contemplated, along with a move that would place the institution closer to New York's other art museums, the Studio Museum has held on to a vision that encompasses both the global and the local, with programmes and exhibitions that explore the whole of the African diaspora and the cultural and historical specificity of its immediate community in Harlem.

In 1969 alone, the museum's exhibitions introduced the public to contemporary Haitian art, showed photography documenting the activism of the Black Panthers, explored contemporary abstraction and presented work by Harlem artists. Studio Museum shows have decisively changed the terrain in the art world, first by making race and identity a concern, then by challenging their power to shape meaning. The museum broke new ground in 1990 with 'The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s'. Organised with the New Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, the exhibition was one of the first ever to take identity – not only race, but also gender and sexuality – as an organising principle.

Under the leadership of Golden, who arrived at the museum as deputy director for exhibitions in 2000 and became director and chief curator in 2005, the Studio Museum rolled out the exhibitions known as the 'F' shows.

In 2001, the first, 'Freestyle', revealed artists who were questioning the place and meaning of Blackness in their work. It yielded the famous, partly tongue-in-cheek, partly serious coinage 'post-black', which Golden and the artist Glenn Ligon used to name those artists who refused to be defined by the category, yet whose lives and careers were indisputably shaped by its existence. In the *New York Times*, Holland Cotter wrote that the show's best artists, 'along with the young curators, scholars and critics who contribute to its slender but spicy catalogue – are operating beyond the level of conceptual noodling that seems to be endemic at present. They're actually talking about something – life – and we're sure to be hearing from many of them again soon.' Next came 'Frequency', 'Flow' (focusing on artists born in Africa working in Europe or the United States), 'Fore', and finally, in 2017, 'Fictions'. These shows presented formally and materially experimental new work reflecting on Black and African identity by artists including Hank Willis Thomas, Thierry Fontaine, Toyin Ojih Odutola and Sable Elyse Smith.

When the Studio Museum reopens, the main gallery will hold an exhibition dedicated to the sculptor Tom Lloyd (1929–96). The Studio Museum's Artist-in-Residence programme has hosted some of most prominent artists working today – Simone Leigh, Kerry James Marshall and Mickalene Thomas, to name just a few. It would be easy to imagine the new building opening with a show organised around one or more of these names. But that's not the Studio Museum's game. When I asked curator Connie Choi about the choice to focus on Lloyd, who is



Cornering, 2019, Sable Elyse
Smith (b. 1986), powder-coated
aluminium, 190.5 × 203.2 × 195.6cm.
Studio Museum in Harlem

something of an unknown, she spoke of the museum's mission. 'The Studio Museum was founded with a deep understanding of what it meant to be a new institution that could contribute something different to the artistic landscape of New York, one that was willing to take risks by supporting work that was experimental, work that was utilising new technologies and new mediums. Throughout our founding documents you see [...] a deep commitment to artists who weren't getting institutional support, not only because they were Black, but because the work that they were making was not painting or sculpture.'

Lloyd holds a special place in the institution's history. He was the museum's first artist-in-residence and the first



Portrait of Sarah Maria Coward, c. 1804, Joshua Johnson (1763–1824), oil on canvas, 91.4 × 76.2cm. Studio Museum in Harlem

artist to have a solo exhibition at the museum. An artist, educator and community organiser, he founded the Store Front Museum in Jamaica, Queens, which between 1971 and 1988 celebrated Black art and culture through exhibitions, performance, festivals and programmes.

As an artist, his medium was light. Long before art and technology seemed a natural pairing, he worked with Alan Sussman, an engineer at Radio Corporation of America (RCA), to create electronic abstractions. The bold geometric shapes of his wall-mounted sculptures, like street lights from another planet, pulse with prismatic colour. Arranged behind lenses that blur and amplify their luminosity, modular arrays of multi-coloured bulbs flash in programmed sequences. Their extended patterns feel like communication; if we took enough time to grasp their rhythm and repetition, a message might be revealed. Until MoMA acquired a light sculpture called

Veleuro in 2024, Lloyd's work was held only by university collections. Because of the deterioration of the technological materials Lloyd used and the difficulty of replacing obsolescent and damaged components, it was rarely displayed. (The Studio Museum show has prompted an extensive and meticulous programme of conservation.)

The Studio Museum's commitment to experimental artists like Lloyd has not gone unchallenged. When his first exhibition opened in 1968, the museum received criticism for displaying work that seemed abstracted from the social and material issues facing the Black community. Spriggs, writing in 2011, reflected on the gulf that seemed to separate Lloyd's work from the community. 'Harlem had spoken and was saying that you cannot just bring anything you want to Harlem and press it on us anymore.' To some minds, Lloyd's art simply did not seem Black enough.

In 1969 Lloyd took part in a symposium convened by the Met to address the fallout after the failure of its 'Harlem on My Mind' exhibition to include the work of a single living Black artist. Lloyd, Jacob Lawrence, Hale Woodruff and other artists came together, in a discussion moderated by Romare Bearden, to talk about the situation facing Black artists in America. When it was suggested that Lloyd's work, rather than reflecting the Black experience, was created by an artist who simply 'happens to be black', Lloyd insisted that his identity was inseparable from his art. For Lloyd, and perhaps for the Studio Museum too, Black art is a space of boundless possibility. 'Black art can be any kind of art, it can be anything,' said Lloyd. 'It can be a painting of a little black child or a laser beam running around the room.'

The Studio Museum will also inaugurate its new building with a rotating display of work from the permanent collection. This is another first. The smaller galleries of the old building meant that visitors rarely had the chance to experience the scope and scale of the collection. Now the museum has 1,300 square metres of gallery space, an increase of more than 50 per cent. The majority of the 9,000 works in the collection were created from the mid 20th century onwards, but there are also earlier works, by the artists working in and around the Harlem Renaissance – and even earlier: Joshua Johnson's *Portrait of Sarah Maria Coward* (c. 1804), for instance, and a landscape of 1878 by Edward Mitchell Bannister. 'Rather than trying to create a linear chronological narrative,' Choi says, 'we want to demonstrate how the artists in our collection have reflected on the generations of artists who came before them and really make our audiences aware that these deep conversations are still happening today.' While the museum has been closed, there have been gifts and acquisitions of work by more than 100 artists not previously represented. In 2021 the museum announced that, in collaboration with the Met, it would take over stewardship of the vast archive of the photographer James Van Der Zee, who captured the likenesses of Harlem residents, politicians and celebrities during the Harlem Renaissance.

In its early years the museum preferred to direct its limited funds to supporting artists directly, rather than acquiring and caring for a collection. Works of art came in nevertheless, as artists recognised the importance



Installation view of the exhibition 'Fictions' at the Studio Museum in Harlem, 2017

of their works being in a museum at a time when most major institutions had yet to acquire work by Black artists. That notion of stewardship is at the heart of the Studio Museum's mission. 'It's the way we've understood that our work is not just what happens on the walls or inside the institution,' Golden says. 'It's the way we hold and care for the ideas, and perhaps also the ideals, of artists of African descent. Institutionally, this has meant that the museum has existed in a space of preservation and presentation, but also very importantly, in a space of advocacy [...] The work that the Studio Museum has done throughout has changed art history.'

The residency programme operates on the same principles. Credited to the abstract painter William T. Williams, one of the Studio Museum's founders, the programme provides early career artists with studio space at the museum, financial support and a culminating exhibition and publication. Few museums can claim to have done as much to support the making of art, to have shown the foresight and the daring to trust artists rather than waiting for the market to shape their careers. From the programme, a close-knit community of artists with deep ties to the museum has emerged. Alumni supported the building project's capital campaign by contributing work to a benefit auction – a collaged painting by Njideka Akunyili Crosby, who joined the museum as a resident artist in 2011, brought in \$3.3 million of the \$20.2 million raised in total. When the new building opens, more than 100 alumni will be represented in an exhibition of new works on paper, reflections on the time they spent at the museum.

A great deal has changed in Harlem since the Studio Museum closed its doors in 2018. Residents and local businesses have been priced out as chain stores such as Whole Foods move in. The Studio Museum, along with nearby institutions like the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, which celebrates its centenary this year, preserve a history and a culture in danger of displacement.

Black artists, too, find themselves in a different place. We've come a long way since the exclusions of the '60s. The art world in recent years has celebrated the work of Black artists in the form of major museum and gallery exhibitions and market success. Yet the current wave of reaction and the second Trump administration's attacks on non-white people and identities, and on museums, arts funding and Black history, reveal the fragility of recent gains and the vulnerability of art and culture. Institutions can help us weather this instability.

As Golden says, 'To be an institution that stewards Black art and culture means that we dedicate ourselves not only to making exhibitions and programmes for our present time, but to writing histories that will live on, that will continue to tell stories about who we are and about what is happening in this moment.'

The reopening of the Studio Museum, in other words, could not be more timely.

Rachel Hunter Himes is a PhD candidate at Columbia University, New York.

The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, reopens on 15 November (www.studiomuseum.org).



Rock star

A century ago, Alexander Tamanyan devised a startling layout for Armenia's capital, Yerevan. Despite changes of regime and fashion, his scheme has endured and is still being realised today

BY WILLIAM DUNBAR



Detail of the facade of the Cafesjian Center for the Arts on the Yerevan Cascade – one of the most important and distinctive parts of Alexander Tamanyan's masterplan for the city



The Opera and Ballet Theatre in Yerevan was designed by Alexander Tamanyan (1878–1936) and opened in 1933. Built in grey tuff, it is at the heart of the city's radial plan

Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, is a forgotten masterpiece of 20th-century urbanism. Conceived as a new mother city for an ancient people emerging from a genocide, it has been repeatedly reimaged: as Bolshevik utopia, Stalinist showcase and Soviet modernist metropolis. Today, it serves as the spiritual centre of a global diaspora of around 10 million Armenians and, if government promises are to be believed, will one day become the capital of the newest EU member state.

At the core of the city's identity lies a single, enduring blueprint: the 1924 masterplan by architect Alexander Tamanyan, whose vision for a new Yerevan still shapes the city. That design, sturdy yet adaptable, is, like Harry Beck's Tube map in London or Berlin's *Ampelmännchen*, one of the great symbols of the city, depicted on keyrings and stickers and picked out in stone relief on the 21st-century town hall. Tamanyan enclosed the centre of the city in a giant circular park, one garden ring to rule them all, within which straight avenues crisscross at diagonals to the north-south axis. This round-grid is intersected by great nodes, squaring the circle in a series of public plazas. It is a plan that has withstood war, political upheaval and economic collapse; the fall of Communism and the chaotic birth of an independent Armenia.

As well as his masterplan, Tamanyan launched what may be the last great historicist architectural tradition of the 20th century. Blending European neoclassicism with the motifs of medieval Armenian churches, he and his successors developed a distinctive style, built almost entirely from tuff, the local pink, grey and orange volcanic stone. The result is a city of solid, austere elegance:

less dripping with picturesque charm than Tbilisi, less flashy than Baku, but possessed of its own quiet power.

Although founded in the Iron Age, by the turn of the 20th century Yerevan was a dusty provincial town of 30,000 with a scattering of Tsarist administrative buildings. When Tamanyan arrived in 1918 it was a mess: there were shortages of food and fuel and it was overrun with thousands of refugees from the genocide in the Ottoman Empire. It had just been declared the capital of the newly independent Republic of Armenia.

Tamanyan was also a refugee, fleeing the chaos of post-revolutionary Petrograd. But, as the most prominent Armenian architect of his time, he had arrived to take up a special position as the state's chief architect. Even as the new republic started to crumble under the pressure of Kemalist Turkey in the west and Bolshevik infiltration from the east, Tamanyan began to arrive at a vision that would transform the rocky provincial seat into a proper capital.

It was not to be – for the moment, at least. By 1920, Armenia had fallen to the Bolsheviks with scarcely a shot fired. Tamanyan, who had built villas for the Russian nobility, fled to Iran. Yet even in exile he remained preoccupied with Yerevan. After a long correspondence, in 1923 the Soviet authorities convinced him to return. By 1924, he had been appointed chief architect of Soviet Armenia, and his masterplan was officially approved. Construction began that same year.

Tamanyan envisioned Yerevan as a thoroughly planned city in the European tradition: a radial design anchored by a circular park, with grand avenues meeting at carefully



The Sardarapat Memorial in Araks, some 50km outside Yerevan, commemorates the Armenian victory against the Ottoman army in May 1918. The complex, built mainly out of red tuff stone, was designed by Rafael Israelyan (1908–73)

designed points for government, culture and recreation. The whole city would be oriented towards Mount Ararat, symbol of Armenia, out of reach beyond the newly drawn Turkish border.

But what would this new city actually look like? In the heady days of the mid 1920s, Constructivists proposed bold experiments in urban living, using cutting-edge technology to build futuristic structures that broke completely with the past. But, to the horror of Armenian Constructivists, Tamanyan's Yerevan took a different direction. 'The idea was to create a new capital which was going to bring together all the historical fragments of this fragmented nation,' says Ruben Arevshatyan, the head of Yerevan's Institute of Contemporary Art.

Tamanyan and his followers mined Armenia's rich ecclesiastical heritage to create a masterful marriage of neoclassicism and medievalism. As odd as it seems, the capital of a Communist Armenia newly recolonised by Moscow was to emerge as an overtly 'national' capital in the ostensibly post-national USSR. It would be an almost bourgeois city of boulevards and mansion blocks. 'Houses built of pink and yellow-grey tuff that reproduce the contours of ancient Armenian churches with a grace that seems entirely natural,' wrote the Soviet novelist Vasily Grossman. This style, 'Armenian classicism', remains a living force in the country to this day.

Yerevan is a city of solid, austere elegance, possessed of its own quiet power

By the time of his death in 1936, just a small part of Tamanyan's vision had become reality. He was a national hero and his coffin was placed in the centre of his unfinished 'Folk House' for the public to mourn. Now the Opera and Ballet Theatre, it is a pharaonic edifice of grey tuff that rises like a dark pyramid in the central node of Tamanyan's plan. The entire city zeroes in on this monument to Armenian culture; a marked contrast from other planned capitals, which tend to hinge on parliament buildings and other administrative structures.

Tamanyan's son completed the Opera, along with the Government Building at the southern node of the plan. The latter epitomises Armenian classicism, built from the pink tuff that would become ubiquitous across Yerevan, even cladding 1970s apartment blocks. Its curved facade – recessed arches, capitals cribbed from monasteries – blends Edwardian town hall with Armenian church. A relief frieze of floral scrolls, grapevines and eagles runs its length, nodding to 10th-century monuments like the Aghtamar Cathedral on Lake Van.

Although he never saw his vision fully realised, Tamanyan was fortunate to die in 1936. A year later, the border-hopping architect to the Russian nobility would likely have fallen victim to Stalin's Great Purge, as several of his Constructivist rivals did. His vision, however, survived. Stalin embraced nationalism as a tool of control, mandating that the Soviet republics be 'nationalist in form, socialist in content'. Folk traditions, epics and

styles were repurposed to serve socialism and, while architects in the rest of the USSR had to abandon plans or force huge changes on half-completed projects, Tamanyan's successors in Yerevan followed in his footsteps.

Inspired by lapidary and relief work (the Armenian church tended to eschew frescoes in favour of worked stone), from the '30s to the late '50s apartment blocks made of polychromatic tuff and covered in swirling stone vines and pomegranates spread out across Tamanyan's uncompleted ring. The diagonal avenues crossing the circle terminated in set-piece public buildings, often museums. Most notable of these buildings is the Matenadaran, built by Mark Grigoryan, the world-class museum of Armenian manuscripts. Its shiny grey edifice (basalt for once) has the air of a great American railway station, while the vast galleries at the rear are copied directly from *gavits*, the oversize narthexes that characterise Armenian cathedrals. Criticised even by the classicists as excessively nationalist (and just excessive) when it was finished in the 1950s, it is now one of the most beloved buildings in the city.

The Matenadaran was part of changes in which the city's central axis was rerouted from an unbuilt north-south line on to the offset Stalin Avenue (now named after Mesrob Mashtots, 5th-century creator of the Armenian alphabet). Towering above Stalin Avenue was a gargantuan statue of the man himself. The pedestal, which contains a museum, was the first major work of Rafael Israelyan, the other great genius of Yerevan. The museum is accessed by a huge arched gateway, almost Norman looking, surrounded in six layers of densely foliate ornamentation and surmounted in a radiating half-moon of large rosettes—the carving evocative of the khachkars, or medieval cross stones, that dot Armenia's rocky landscape. Israelyan would oversee the end of Stalinist architecture and shepherd Armenian classicism into a new era. Reflecting on his plinth for the Man of Steel, he is said to have remarked, 'Knowing that the glory of dictators is temporary, I built a simple three-nave Armenian basilica.'

After Stalin's death, the relative loosening of Soviet control led Yerevan to centre national identity even more. In April 1965, the 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, 100,000 people gathered in front of Tamanyan's Opera House to demand the massacre be officially commemorated by the Soviet authorities. Soon after, there were two monumental additions to the cityscape: Mother Armenia, a 22-metre-high young woman who replaced Stalin on his plinth, grasping a sword and looking defiantly towards the Turkish border; and the brutalist Tsitsernakaberd Armenian Genocide Memorial. Outside Yerevan, they were joined by a third: the neo-Babylonian monument to the battle of Sadarapat.

Tsitsernakaberd is located on a hill just outside Tamanyan's ring, with central Yerevan on one side, and inaccessible Ararat on another. Visiting the complex is a moving experience. A circle of 12 basalt stelae lean dramatically towards each other over an eternal flame. For once there is no adornment, no historical motifs on the dolmen-like structure, in which each of the stelae represent one of the lost provinces of western Armenia. Visitors must walk down steps between the stones to reach the flame, which burns in a semi-subterranean memorial space. On exit, a 44-metre-high granite needle points into the sky, raising the visitors head towards the



Part of the memorial to the Armenian Genocide at Tsitsernakaberd; each of the 12 slabs represents one of the provinces lost to Turkey during the atrocities

heavens, from commemoration of the past to contemplation of the future.

Sadarapat, by contrast, is triumphal. An hour from Yerevan, it was here that a rag-tag Armenian army stopped the Turks in 1918, a victory without which Armenia might not have survived at all. Crucially, this was an engagement in which the Armenians fought alone, with no help from the Russians or any other Soviet people – a politically awkward fact that had hitherto prevented the battle's commemoration. In 1968, Israelyan laid out a memorial complex the size of a small airport. The visitor enters between two giant winged bulls in red tuff, Soviet lamassu, which flank a stylised campanile in the same stone, Ararat looming behind. Israelyan also built a folk museum at the complex. Here too are the gavit-shaped galleries of the Matenadaran, but Israelyan's historicism is almost entirely stripped back, bereft of ecclesiastical nods and intricate detailing, a new historicism for a new era.

The apotheosis of this new aesthetic is the Cascade, a 300-metre-high complex of staircases, gardens and fountains that ascends a slope just to the north of Tamanyan's great circle. Located opposite the Opera, the cascade had been envisaged by Tamanyan as a place for recreation, a kind of upper deck where the city could promenade and enjoy the finest views of Ararat. Jim Torosyan's 1980 design followed Tamanyan but bequeathed something grander: a hanging gardens in travertine. Ascending the stairs, visitors are presented with a series of terraced gardens and gushing fountains, each representing a different

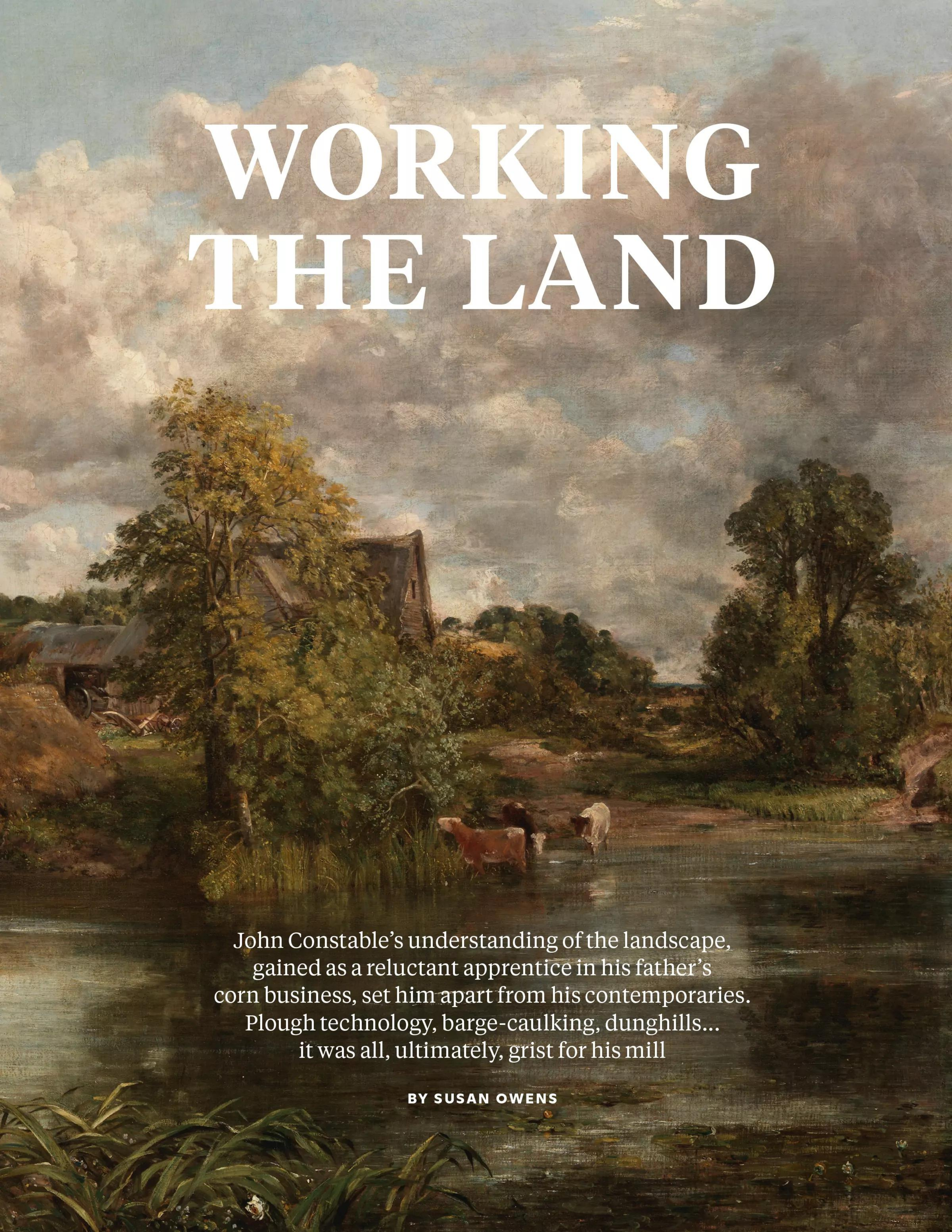
stage in Armenia's history from the Bronze Age to the 20th century, motifs picked out in high relief. Beset by construction difficulties, the complex was finished only in 2002 when Armenian-American philanthropist Gerard Cafesjian stepped in. The Cafesjian Museum of Art in the interior of the complex displays his collection and provides a much-needed escalator service for those unwilling to climb the 572 steps.

The Cascade is a testament to Tamanyan's genius: it takes his plan in a new direction, creating a joyous public space. There are, however, less happy legacies. Tamanyan had planned a great north-south axis bisecting his circle but it was never implemented, partly because its course ran directly through Old Yerevan, the remains of the Tsarist provincial capital with its handsome *fin-de-siècle* buildings. In 2007 the notoriously corrupt government of the day sent in the bulldozers. The result is a tragic loss and a failure: an AutoCAD hellscape that could be found anywhere in the world. The only difference between this and Westfield, say, are the few remnants of Old Yerevan entombed in or dwarfed by towering condos – and the dressing of the condos themselves. The lower floors of the near-empty buildings are post-modern pastiches of Tamanyan's grand style. Still, the man cannot be faulted for the transgressions of his followers. For better or worse, Yerevan will forever be responding to Tamanyan's sweeping vision and the Armenian classicism that he pioneered.

William Dunbar is a writer based in Tbilisi.



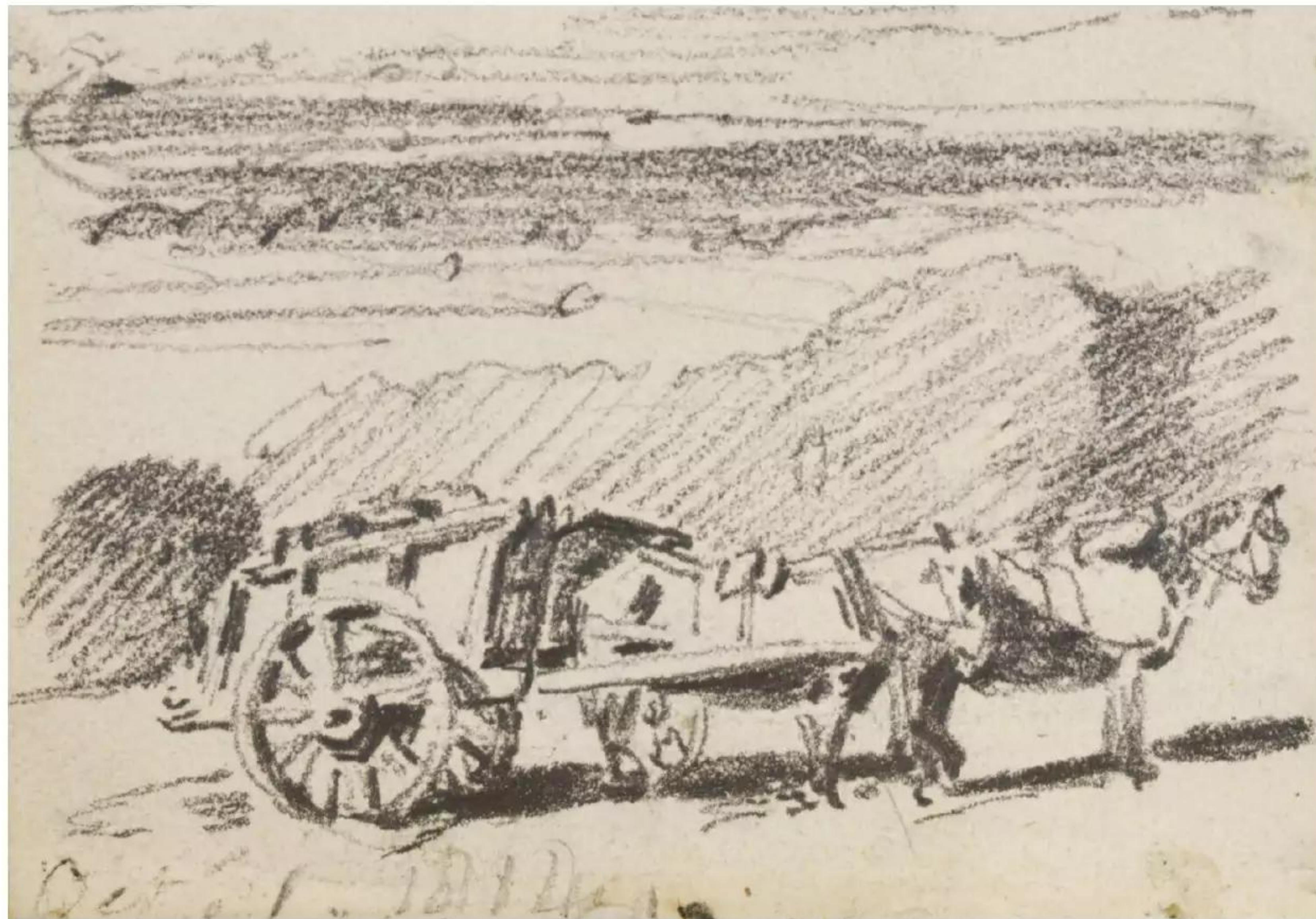
The White Horse, 1819,
John Constable (1776–1837),
oil on canvas, 131.4 × 188.3cm.
Frick Collection, New York



WORKING THE LAND

John Constable's understanding of the landscape, gained as a reluctant apprentice in his father's corn business, set him apart from his contemporaries. Plough technology, barge-caulking, dunghills... it was all, ultimately, grist for his mill

BY SUSAN OWENS



Detail from a page (dated 1 October) in Constable's sketchbook, filled July–October 1814. Victoria and Albert Museum, London

John Constable was 20 when, in March 1797, he wrote with a heavy heart to his friend J. T. Smith: 'I must now take your advice and attend to my father's business, as we are likely soon to lose an old servant (our clerk), who has been with us eighteen years; and now I see plainly it will be my lot to walk through life in a path contrary to that in which my inclination would lead me.'

For six and a half years after he left school in 1792, Constable's future hung in the balance. His ambitions to become an artist were pinched by family pressures and came close to being nipped in the bud. According to the Suffolk poet Ann Taylor, who met Constable when she was in her teens, this interesting young man who was often seen with his sketchbook in the lanes and fields around East Bergholt was regarded locally as a 'hero in distress'. It was said that his father, Golding Constable, 'wished to confine him to the drudgery of his own business' – a fate that seemed 'unspeakably barbarous' to her and her friends. It was only when John's younger brother Abram reached the age of 16 and agreed to take responsibility for running the family firm that Constable was free to go to London to train at the Royal Academy Schools, where he was admitted as a probationer in March 1799.

Drudgery or not, Golding's trade was lucrative. He owned two watermills, a windmill and some 36 acres of land, and ran a complementary transport business. His barges carried sacks of flour from his mills down the River Stour, and his brig took them round the coast and up the Thames estuary to London to be sold. Not long before John was born, Golding was able to build an impressive, four-square mansion for his family in the centre of the village, close to the church. He called it East Bergholt House.

To many, John's position between 1792 and 1799 was enviable. To him, however, it was not only disappointing but also peculiarly frustrating. He had an older brother who would in normal circumstances have stepped into

his father's shoes, but Golding Junior had a learning disability and suffered from debilitating fits. Abram was only nine when John left school. As their father was not the sort of man to leave the future of his business uncertain, any more than his corn unharvested or his barges uncaulked, the spotlight fell on John, who was duly kitted out in the miller's traditional white coat and hat and sent to the windmill on East Bergholt Common to learn how to manage the machinery and read the sky. The practical part of Constable's training would have involved induction into all aspects of his father's enterprises, from overseeing cargoes off vessels and into warehouses at Mistley Quay to studying the maintenance of mills, barges, locks and towpaths.

According to Constable's friend and biographer C. R. Leslie, Constable worked for his father 'for about a year', and 'performed the duties required of him carefully and well'. Was it really so short a time, a fraction of the period he lived in his parents' home in suspense about his future? Leslie was assembling his narrative from remembered conversations with Constable; he did not interview him formally, as a professional biographer would. And Constable himself, some 40 years later and in general conversation with a friend, could well have been vague about the extent of his youthful involvement, or even sought to downplay it. The Golding Senior who emerges from his few surviving letters – careful and deliberate – does not sound like a man who would have been happy to allow a capable son to wander around sketching all day when there was a business to be managed. He had brought up his sons to work. It is hard to imagine that he did not find at least ad hoc tasks for his middle boy during those uncertain years of the 1790s. Constable's recent biographer James Hamilton has pointed out that as he acquired the name 'the handsome miller' locally at this time, he was evidently regarded as just that – a miller. It seems likely that during those six and a half years he was balancing his art with the demands of the family firm, which naturally fluctuated with the



Boat-Building near Flatford Mill, 1814–15, John Constable, oil on canvas, 50.8 × 61.6cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London

If the average exhibition visitor puzzled over this painting, any Suffolk farmer would have known exactly what it was about

weather and the season. Even if his duties were light and predominantly administrative, his habits of mind would have been shaped by an environment in which daily conversation revolved anxiously around the weather, the state of the crops and the height of the river. In time to come it set him at an angle to other landscape painters and their ideas about what constituted an attractive view; but it also gave him the ability to see things that others missed. His art, he once said, was 'to be found under every hedge and in every lane, and therefore nobody thinks it worth picking up'.

Open his sketchbooks and Constable's preoccupation with ploughs, carts and barges is impossible to ignore. His oil paintings took his insider's view of the working landscape to the gallery walls, sometimes foregrounding activities the purpose of which is not immediately obvious. Some have an apparently riddling air: why is a heavy, working horse standing in a barge on a river? Answer: the towpath switched banks at that point on the Stour. What about that one performing an unlikely jump over a barrier on a towpath? Answer: barriers were built along the path to prevent livestock from straying and tow-horses were taught to do this. At Royal Academy exhibitions, however, viewers must sometimes have stood in front of these paintings and wondered.

The rattle of agricultural nuts and bolts in Constable's work increased sharply in volume in 1814, when it entered a short-lived but remarkable period of intense realism (see, for instance, his oil sketch of two ploughs, and a sketchbook from that year, both in the V&A). Between 1799 and 1816, the year he married, he lived and painted in London during the winter and spring, usually returning home to East Bergholt in June or July, where he would stay for around four months. During this time he would draw and sketch in the familiar lanes and fields. But working on a composition in his London painting room was not always easy and, in February 1814, the picture he would exhibit that summer with the title *Landscape: Ploughing Scene in Suffolk* was causing him particular trouble. The problem? The composition itself. It had been sparked by a tiny pencil sketch he had made from the boundary of East Bergholt's Old Hall estate in July 1813: a panoramic view of the Stour valley and the distant village of Dedham. When his picture



was scaled up on canvas, however, it lacked activity, what Thomas Gainsborough had called 'a little business for the Eye'. So Constable solved it by adding, as he explained to his friend John Dunthorne, 'some ploughmen to the landscape' which was, he said, 'a great help'. To his composition, perhaps; but for most viewers used to depictions of spring or autumn ploughing, it was a peculiarly unseasonal addition to a picture painted in the rich greens of high summer.

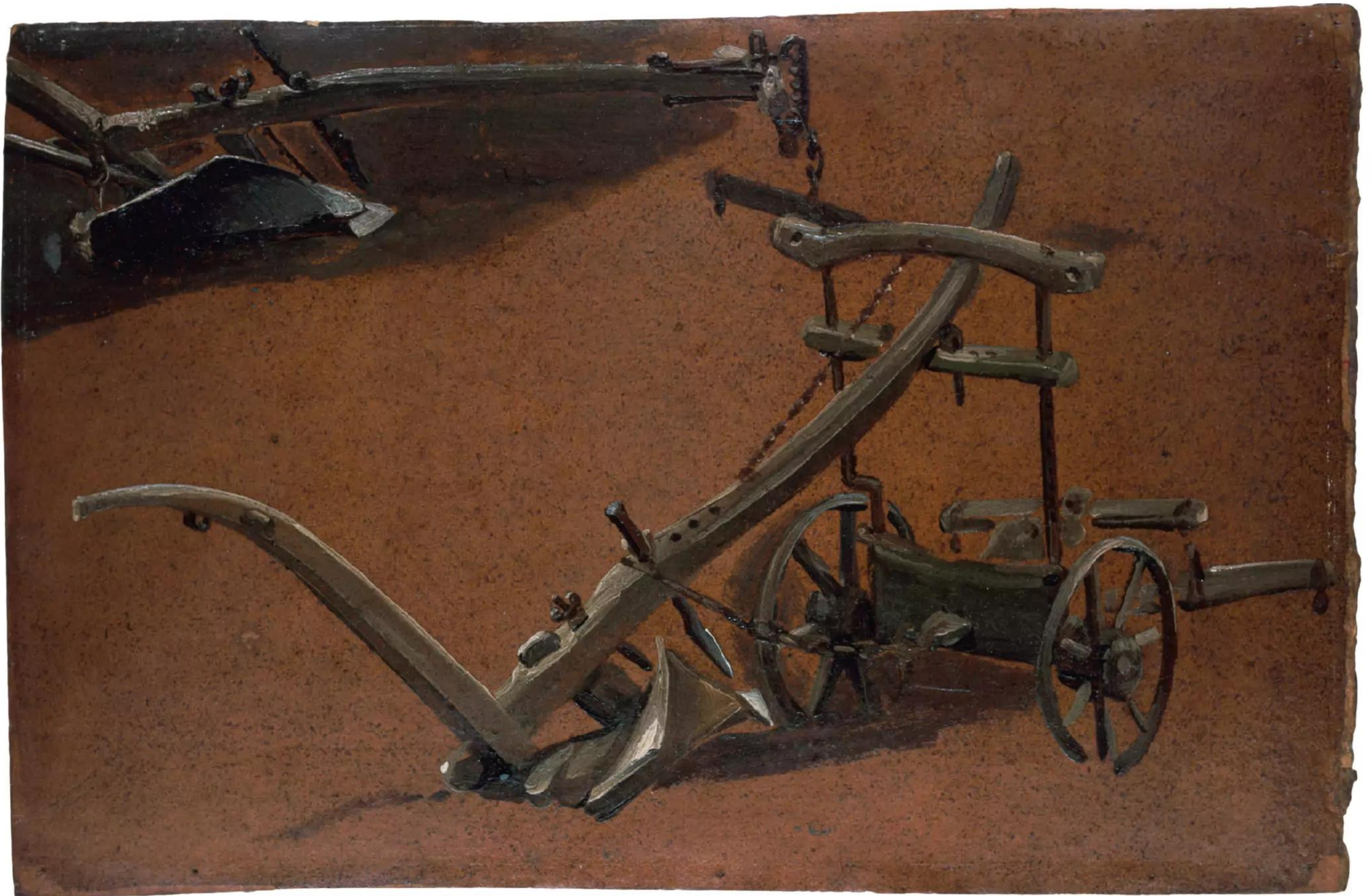
If the average exhibition visitor puzzled over this anomaly, any Suffolk farmer would have known exactly what it



Landscape: Ploughing Scene in Suffolk, 1814, John Constable, oil on canvas, 50.5×76.5cm. Private collection

was about. Even though the ploughmen had arrived belatedly in this particular landscape, Constable was recording a long-established local practice – which was presumably why he added the words ‘in Suffolk’ to the title when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy. Just 10 years previously, the agricultural reformer Arthur Young had noted in his *Farmer's Calendar* (1804) that heavy soil, if ploughed too early, remains ‘stiff and saddened’ and then ‘very difficult to be acted upon by any instrument’; the farmer’s ‘only chance is, to have abundance of patience’ and ‘avoid

such spring ploughings’. What Young called the ‘clayey loam’ of Suffolk was particularly susceptible. The solution, summer ploughing, was far from ideal: it was hard work for both horses and men, because by then the earth had dried into great clumps, and hot days made it more grueling still. A field treated in this way, which would be sown early with winter wheat, was known as a ‘summer-tilth’ or a ‘summerland’ – the title Constable eventually gave to the mezzotint after this painting in the set of prints he published in 1830–32, *Various Subjects of Landscape, characteristic*



Studies of Two Ploughs, 1814, John Constable, oil on paper, 17.2 × 26cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London

of *English Scenery*. Despite sounding as though it might refer to the appearance of verdant fields under summer skies, *A Summerland* had a precise agricultural meaning. When, however, in 1824–25 Constable painted a copy of *Ploughing Scene*, he gave it a more conventional appearance, choosing autumnal tones of grey and brown for the fields and foliage.

Another problem Constable experienced with his *Ploughing Scene* turned out to be the catalyst for a radical change of method. In his London painting room at the tail end of winter, he struggled to evoke the noonday heat of a summer's day. 'I must try and warm the picture a little more if I can,' he wrote to Dunthorne in 1814. 'It is bleak and looks as if there would be a shower of sleet.' He saw that one way of tackling this was to paint outdoors in order to capture not just how a place looked, but how it felt, to feel the warmth of the sun and to smell the earth and the river. In September and October that year, back in East Bergholt, he worked on two paintings in this way. In the mornings he set up his easel on the edge of Old Hall park, not far from the spot from which he had drawn the landscape that became *Ploughing Scene*; and in the afternoons he went down to Flatford mill, where a barge was being constructed in his father's dry dock. If one problem he had faced earlier in the year had been a lack of animation, in both places he found an abundance of it.

Boat-Building near Flatford Mill (exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1815; now in the V&A's collection) is Constable's

most audaciously workaday picture: its subject, a barge under construction, is not just a component of a landscape scene but front and centre. One craftsman sits in front of its mighty prow while another shapes a curved timber; a cauldron contains pitch to caulk its seams; and various tools of the barge-makers' trade are scattered about, as though the other workers have just laid them down and gone off for their break. The painting is so detailed it could serve as a practical guide. It is as though the experience of working directly on to canvas outdoors had reconnected Constable to the industrial landscape he knew so intimately and given him the courage to paint the activities that most fascinated him, however unconventional they might look on the wall of the Royal Academy (from where, perhaps inevitably, the picture failed to sell).

The other painting on which Constable worked during the autumn of 1814 was his most audacious, full stop. Philadelphia Godfrey – the daughter of Peter Godfrey, who owned Old Hall, the grandest house in East Bergholt – was getting married later that year. Her fiancé, Thomas Fitzhugh, had commissioned Constable to paint a Suffolk scene for Philadelphia to take to her new home. The chosen view was from the edge of Old Hall's park looking over Dedham Vale, with Dedham village and church in the distance. Did Fitzhugh or Peter Godfrey discuss the composition with Constable? It would have been strange if they had not. Did they walk to the fence and look with him? If they had, they would surely have asked the artist to



Stour Valley and Dedham Church, 1814–15, John Constable, oil on canvas, 55.6 × 77.8cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

rethink his viewpoint or at least to exercise poetic licence. A new feature of the landscape had appeared in the form of a gigantic dunghill – known locally as a ‘dungle’ – constructed over the summer and left to rot. Farm labourers were now busy shovelling out the manure and loading it onto carts so that it could be distributed onto arable fields. As a subject, Constable found it irresistible. He planned his composition around it, even making an adjustment from a preliminary sketch so that the dungle would be more central in the finished painting. In the middle distance the River Stour winds through the valley, but there is no mistaking the picture’s focus: a vast and ungainly dunghill, frilled here and there with weeds, its top touched by the rays of the morning sun.

A less appropriate wedding present would be hard to imagine. What Philadelphia thought, and where – or if – she hung it in her London home to remind her of Suffolk, are not recorded. For Constable, though, the dungle and the busy activity around it were every bit as interesting as a ripe crop; probably more, because they showed labour, skill and good husbandry in action. His choice of subject sprang from the same mentality that led him to paint the construction of a working barge while more conventional artists were painting fishing boats. His background in farming and land stewardship caused him to see landscape as a process, with past and future dimensions. A picture that could be interpreted as a gross insult from any other landscape painter of his generation sits more

comfortably when understood within the context of the farming year, in which the autumn’s preparation of fields was balanced against the following year’s yield. Either that, or he and Philadelphia had history.

Constable’s own marriage in October 1816, after which he lived full-time in London, brought a change to his focus. After a final long stay with his wife, Maria, in the summer of 1817, visits to his beloved corner of Suffolk were brief and on family business. He returned to painting in the studio. There, a profounder sense of place filled the gap left by direct experience; Constable continued to paint Suffolk scenes, with his view from London seasoned by distance and enriched by memory and emotion. The grit in the oyster, however – his insistence on the importance of agricultural work in all its local peculiarity and technical detail – did not dissipate in the atmosphere of London but sat at the heart of his six-foot Stour scenes. It powers them like an electrical charge. Those uncertain years of the 1790s may have been ones of apprehension and worry, but the work from which he longed to be released was precisely what sowed the seeds of his future greatness.

Susan Owens’s upcoming book Constable’s Year: An Artist in Changing Seasons will be published by Thames & Hudson in January 2026.

‘Turner and Constable’ is at Tate Britain, London, from 27 November to 12 April 2026 (www.tate.org.uk).

Look



Enamelled swords played an important symbolic role in the courts of 19th-century India. Nicole Ioffredi, curator of an exhibition opening at the Wallace Collection this month, explains the artistry behind one such masterpiece

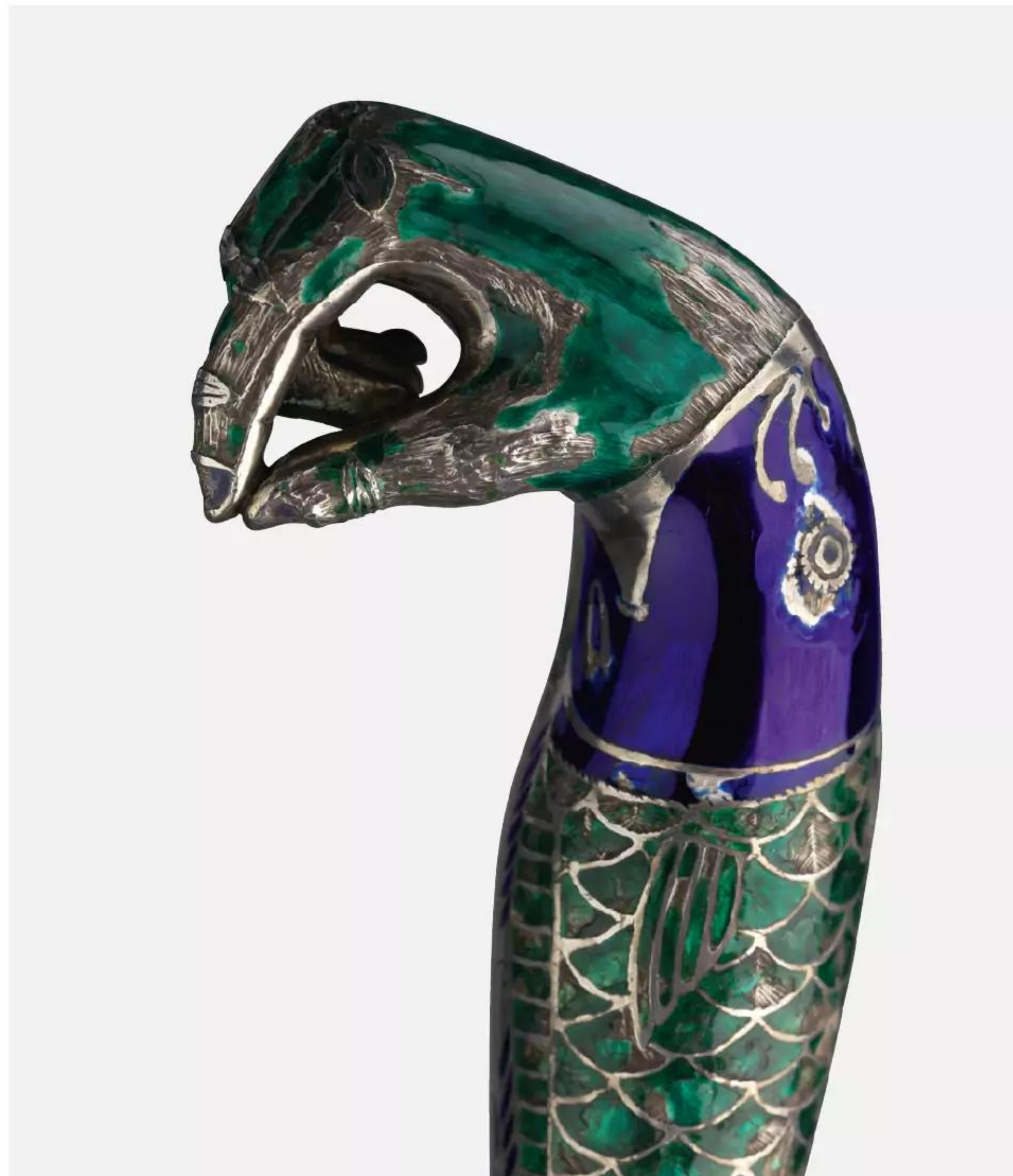
Sword and scabbard, early 19th century,
unknown maker, Awadh, steel, silver,
enamel (sword); wood, velvet, silver, enamel
(scabbard); length 94.7cm (sword); 88cm
(scabbard). Wallace Collection, London



sharp

On the hilt, the enameller would have made fine incisions into the silver to resemble fish scales, before applying an enamel coating





The hand on the pommel is a highly unusual motif for swords such as this

W

hen the writer Edward Bulwer-Lytton came up with the phrase ‘the pen is mightier than the sword’ in 1839, he had surely never seen the swords crafted in Lucknow at the turn of the 19th century. Not only were these some of the most magnificent weapons being produced at this time, but their making also arose out of a violent history – one that rewrote the rules of power in India. In 1738–39, Nadir Shah, the emperor of Iran, invaded northern India. He and his forces sacked Delhi, raided the Mughal treasury and carted off the Peacock Throne, a jewel-studded 17th-century marvel that had taken seven years to make. Politically and symbolically this dealt a crushing blow to the Mughal Empire and, over the following decades, a number of regional courts started gaining prominence and power.

One of these was Lucknow, in the province of Awadh (also known as Oudh). By the early 19th century Lucknow was among South Asia’s pre-eminent cities: its rulers were keen that it eclipse Delhi as a cultural capital and lavished their patronage on poetry, painting and decorative arts. The art made in Awadh in the 18th and early 19th century, particularly painting, remains celebrated today; the traditional embroidery technique *chikankari* is also well known. Swords, however, get less time in the limelight, despite the important part they played in court culture. They were given as diplomatic gifts to courtiers and visitors to the courts, usually in *khilat* (robes of honour) ceremonies, in which the ruler would present head-to-toe garments, often accompanied by jewellery and a sword or dagger. The ruler would wear all this before presenting it to his subordinate

– the idea being that it would be invested with his essence, so that the recipient would be physically incorporated into his realm. It was an enactment of court hierarchies: the value of the sword that people were given would be commensurate with their rank. They were, literally, status symbols.

This particular sword, made sometime in the early 19th century, was not the most prestigious weapon one could have received: it was not studded with diamonds or other precious gems. But we can tell from the extraordinary enamelwork that it would have been the type to be flaunted at court. The more enamel on the sword, the more illustrious the bearer, since enamelling was time-consuming and expensive work. First, the hilt had to be fashioned. Then, using a variety of steel tools, the enameller would have made some incredibly fine incisions into the silver surface – in the case of this hilt, the incisions resemble fish scales – before applying the enamel. To make the enamel the craftsman would have crushed coloured glass using a mortar and pestle, added water to create a paste and applied this paste to the grooves. Then he would have fired it in a kiln and burnished it, giving it a lovely shine.

Nineteenth-century kilns were not like the kilns of today: you couldn’t set them to a specific temperature. The craftsman would have had to monitor it by instinct and intuition, controlling the heat with a blowpipe: if left in the kiln for too long, the colours would bleed, as each colour has a different melting point. The enameller needed a mastery of melting points, control over the fire and good taste to pair the colours nicely – this sword features blue and green, two colours associated with Lucknow.

The blade, too, is remarkable. Affixed to the hilt using lac, a sticky resin secreted by lac insects, the blade tapers elegantly across its width. This is a lethal weapon: some scholars maintain that such swords were purely ceremonial, but they very well could have been used. There were assassination attempts at some Indian courts; it was a militaristic society and these were turbulent times. Having such a sword attached to the waist would have signalled not just the wearer's status but also his readiness for combat.

The blade is made of high-carbon watered steel, commonly known as Damascus steel. Europeans tried to replicate the beautiful marbled patterns but couldn't do it without pattern welding – mixing different kinds of metal. That's not how the patterns on this sword were achieved: the craftsman heated the steel with certain plant materials so that the steel absorbed some carbon. This was to strengthen the steel rather than for aesthetic purposes, but after the heating process, polishing it with a weak acid – from a lime or a pomegranate, say – would have brought out these patterns to dazzling effect.

We're fortunate that the marbled effect is still visible on this sword, even if it's too faint to show up in the photographs. Many swords were vigorously polished by dealers in the 19th century, which rubbed the Damascus finish right off. Conservators can revive the patterns simply by applying fruit acid, but this isn't a decision to be taken lightly: one could argue that excessive polishing is part of the history of the object, and conservators generally try to interfere with the object as little as possible – even when the item in question has been transformed by its previous owners.

Blades and hilts were swapped around throughout South Asia to keep pace with changing fashions, and this sword is no exception. Look at the ricasso, the unsharpened part where the blade joins the hilt: it's a little wide, and seems like it was filed down slightly to make it fit. Ricassos, which provide a safe spot for the wielder to rest their index finger, are common in European swords. That this particular sword has a ricasso suggests that the blade was also made in Lucknow, which in the early 19th century was a melting pot of cultural influences. As well as the rulers, who were of Iranian heritage, and the many artists who had arrived from Mughal Delhi as the empire collapsed, there were an unusually high number of Europeans at the court, from painters to mercenaries.

The sword may be a compound creation, but the scabbard is an original one. This is not always the case. Swords were worn as a normal part of courtly dress: if you were presented a sword by a ruler, you'd be expected to wear it, not hide it in your house. This naturally led to wear and tear, and many scabbards have been fitted with new fabric over the centuries. They can also suffer from the warping of their wooden cores over time, which can make it a little tricky to unsheathe and resheathe the sword.

This particular scabbard, made from locally sourced wood covered by early 19th-century European velvet, is a marvellous specimen. We don't know where in Europe the velvet would have come from, but it likely made its way to India via established trade networks. One of the British expats in Lucknow's orbit was Robert Home, who designed a multitude of objects for the court. Designs by Home and other artists would have fed into swords like this one.

The animal imagery that appears on many of the hilts was often intended to show dominance but sometimes simply referred to courtly leisure activities. There were a lot of ram fights at the court, for instance, which helps explain the rams on some of the hilts. On this particular sword, fish take pride of place. In 1720, the Mughal Emperor bestowed upon Saadat Khan, the first Nawab of Lucknow, the right to adopt the exalted ensign *mahi-ye maratib*, or the 'Fish of Dignity', which would have been held aloft as a standard in military or ceremonial processions. The symbol would have resonated with both Hindus and Muslims: in Islamic cosmology, the world is indirectly borne on the back of a fish; in Hindu mythology, a fish is the first of the 10 avatars of Vishnu.

Over time, the fish became the primary emblem of the court of Lucknow – even today, a pair of fish are a prominent part of the state emblem of Uttar Pradesh, where Lucknow is now situated. It cropped up in architecture, furniture and even fish-shaped boats (of which none, unfortunately, are extant). Fish are all over this sword: as well as the scale-like incisions on the hilt there are blue and green fish on the crossguard, plump fish-shaped scabbard fittings and, most memorably, the tip of the scabbard – chape is the technical term – which makes it look like a fish is energetically swimming up the sheath. The chape was crafted in a similar way to the hilt, with enamel on silver. It's affixed to the scabbard with some kind of plant or animal-based glue. The attention to detail is wondrous: look at the fish's pupils, with their minute application of pink enamel.

Many of the hilts from this period are animal-headed, so the hand motif on the pommel and at the ends of the crossguard here is unusual. We aren't aware of any particular symbolism for the hand gesture. Some swords from Lucknow have a string of glass beads several centimetres long coming down from the mouth of the animal-shaped pommel and connecting to the crossguard. There are portraits that show this bead-string detail as well – a bit like a decorative knuckle-guard, with no protective function. So perhaps the fingers at the bottom of this hilt were pinching a string of beads. In any case, it's a pleasingly quirky detail.

Most of the historical sources we have tend to concern the elites, so we know little about the lives of the craftsmen – and it would have been men – who created this sword and scabbard. This is despite the fact that a large proportion of Lucknow's working population were professional artisans. Some would have been attached to the court, some not. What we do know is that the craftsmen, who learned the craft from their fathers, would have enjoyed generous patronage at Lucknow. Given how much of the population comprised artisans, patronage was part of a ruler's duty. By spending extravagantly on decorative arts and craftsmanship he was essentially keeping the labour market afloat. We don't know for sure whether this sword was given as a gift or purchased by commission, but either way it's a rarefied example of the fine art of weaponry.

As told to Arjun Sajip.

Nicole Ioffredi is curator of 'Swords of Lucknow', which is at the Wallace Collection, London, from 26 November – 22 March 2026 (www.wallacecollection.org).



The fish motif on the chape of the scabbard chimes with the ensign bestowed upon the first Nawab of Lucknow: the 'Fish of Dignity'



This page: The first room, with vitrines displaying part of the Chinese porcelain collection. In the centre is a 16th-century nanban lacquered chest

Opposite: The final room contains French vitrines from the 19th century in the style of Louis XV, one of which displays white Dehua porcelain from the 17th and 18th centuries

Shelf



love

Hidden away in one of Paris's least-visited museums is a collection of East Asian art with a unique story to tell

BY EDWARD BEHRENS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MAGALI PAULIN



The enfilade of netsuke in the main gallery; also visible in the nearest case is a Chinese lacquered stool from the 16th century, inlaid with mother of pearl



A glazed stoneware Chinese guardian lion (17th or 18th century) keeps watch at the entrance to the main gallery of the Musée d'Ennery

W

hen the French novelist Jules Verne sent his clubbable Englishman Phineas Fogg around the world in 80 days, he sent him via Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan. Perhaps surprisingly, Verne does not seem all that interested in one of travel's main attractions, the discovery of different countries. Of Japan, he offers a little colour, but only a little: 'youngsters, who looked as if they were cut-outs from a Japanese screen, were playing among short-legged poodles and yellowish cats that had no tails and were very lazy and affectionate. [...] The streets were teeming with people and there was an incessant coming and going.'

Yet while Verne's globe-trotting novel, with its endless facts about treaties and international border agreements, was finding commercial success, France had become gripped by a mania for Japanese culture. After Japan opened up to foreign trade in 1858, Paris – the city that invented new ways of shopping – became intoxicated with the scents and sights of *Japonisme*. The style of this obsession is captured by Proust, in his description of his character Odette's house. As Swann, the love-stricken protagonist of *À la recherche du temps perdu*, climbs the demimondaine's stairs, he sees 'dark painted walls hung with Oriental draperies, strings of Turkish beads, and a huge Japanese lantern suspended by a silken cord (which last, however, so that her visitors should not be deprived of the latest comforts of Western civilisation was lighted by a gas-jet inside)'.

Coupled with the heady scent of chrysanthemums nurtured by Odette, the attractions of this new culture are – in that recently degraded term – immersive. Émile Zola and the Goncourt brothers led the literary world in picking up the trend. Galleries such as Sichel and Bing established themselves on it, and even the department store Le Bon Marché offered an entire floor of Japanese and East Asian goods.

Amid the Haussmann palaces near the Bois de Boulogne, it is possible to see exactly what all this looked like. Fifty-nine Avenue Foch is home to the Musée d'Ennery, a curious part of the national collection of Asian art and an annex of the much better known Musée Guimet. It is open only on Saturdays. The building can accommodate no more than 15 people at a time yet the lucky few who enter will see a collection of Asian works of art that have been left exactly as they were in 1892. The museum itself is not unlike a Vernian mystery. It consists of four large rooms (and a side chamber) dedicated to the the arts of China and Japan that include porcelain, jade, bronzes and netsuke. In the centre of the wall of the second room is a bust of the playwright Adolphe d'Ennery, the museum's namesake, who made a fortune out of adapting the novels of Jules Verne for the stage. Yet in a twist that could have come out of one of Verne's novels, to say the museum was named after him is a case of misidentification.

The collection itself belonged to Adolphe's wife: Clémence, or to give her full name, Joséphine Clémence

Lecarpentier Desgranges d'Ennery. Clémence was born to a family of minor nobility in 1823. Her father was an army squadron leader and her first marriage was to a lawyer who helpfully moved to Algeria by himself in 1844, to pursue a career in the colonial administration, when the relationship wasn't working out. She met d'Ennery in 1841, probably had an affair with him, collaborated on his plays and became a fixture of the literary scene. She appears in the Goncourts' journals as Gisette and served as the model for Maria in Edmond Goncourt's novel of theatrical life, *Le Faustin*. She had to wait until the death of her first husband before she could marry d'Ennery in 1881. She died in 1898.

Clémence never left France. She acquired the 6,000 objects on display in her museum entirely from Parisian dealers. Her collection started with a present from her mother of some vases and boxes from China and she fell in love with the tactile quality of small sculptural objects. The art historian Elizabeth Emery refers to an interview in which Clémence tells reporters that 'unlike her friends, who spent their time and money ordering dresses [...] she had chosen to invest in art'.

The story of the museum can be seen either as a story of vitrines or a story of exchange. These two strands, nat-

the vitrines that emulated what were thought to be classic 'oriental' designs. The final and most incongruous vitrines are in the final room, covered in gilt and in the style of Louis XV.

For all the accusations of appropriation that might be levelled at Viardot's vitrines, there is something magical about them. The mother-of-pearl is pretty, the glass has both a beguiling tone and uninterrupted span and the back of each vitrine is lined with a 19th-century velvet whose luminosity is unrivalled. Behind this superficial attractiveness there is a certain ignorance underpinning them. Even the netsukes' ziggurats bruit this as some of the edges of the platforms are covered in mother-of-pearl Chinese characters that have been misunderstood by the craftsmen and laid onto the surface the wrong way up, rendering them completely illegible – a gesture of authenticity that accentuates foreignness. Yet again the vitrine and its contents is cut off from any culture.

Nonetheless, Clémence left her collection to the nation so that people could appreciate the work of Chinese, Japanese and Korean artists. This is where the elements of cultural exchange come in. Clémence might have bought netsuke by the boxload (157 at a time from Le Bon Marché) but her interest in these objects was genuine. It was not particularly connoisseurial, but admiring. She kept impeccable records and her inventory has been preserved to this day, offering a much valued insight into how collectors and dealers operated at this time of rapid market expansion.

Seventeenth and 18th-century dog lions were some of the first things she bought, some in their original state, others with ormolu. 'She would buy many funny things,' says Baptiste, 'because she had different criteria for her collection. At first, she started mostly with China, Chinese porcelain, and particularly Chinese monsters [...] She also said that some of these chimeras looked like ladies that she knows and she found that very funny.' Yet the collection is not thoughtless.

One case of wooden netsuke – much rarer than their ivory counterparts – tells the story of the life of the monk Bodidharma. Among the sheer volume are works of particular fineness. A 17th-century famille rose scroll vase, for example, or among a shelf of jade carved in organic forms a piece of white jade carved into the form of that impossible many-fingered citrus, a Buddha's hand. Each jade is, to the joy of connoisseurs, still paired with its original stand. It is worth remembering that there was no scholarship available about these objects to either serious collectors or amateurs in Europe; the only value by which people could collect was one of appearance.

In the room with the bust of Adolphe d'Ennery is an object outside a vitrine. It is a largish rabbit made from glass. It is not particularly beautiful. Baptiste goes so far as to say, 'I know it looks very ugly,' but its appearance belies its importance. This product of 18th-century Imperial China is the result of the Jesuits teaching the skill of glass-making to the Chinese who became interested in the relationship between porcelain and glass. This fascinating – but to the modern eye rather sad – rabbit, with

Clémence left her collection to the nation so that people could appreciate the work of Chinese, Japanese and Korean artists

urally, overlap but the emphasis is slightly different. At first, it is the story of the vitrines that speaks more clearly. A vitrine appears to offer something up for inspection, to exist as part of a scientific endeavour to observe, but with the object fixed behind the cold glass, it also cuts off the viewer. The object behind the glass is not to be picked up and handled, it is not to be used – merely looked at. And yet that doesn't feel like a prohibition in the rooms of the Musée d'Ennery. Each room is filled with so many that they operate as part of the invitation to explore. Furthermore, the vitrines are themselves objects of exquisite beauty.

There are three types in evidence. The netsuke have special, lower cases, with a ziggurat built up inside to display a pyramid of Japanese craftsmanship. Porcelain and other crafts are displayed in vitrines made by the cabinet maker Gabriel Viardot (1830–1906). As the director of the museum, Pierre Baptiste, says, he 'was a French man who began to develop a company buying oriental furniture, mostly Chinese and Vietnamese, and transforming them into French, fake oriental furniture', essentially ripping off the mother-of-pearl panels to add in to his French cabinets. Clémence, however, went one step further, commissioning carved creatures on top of



A group of 17th- and 18th-century Chinese porcelain animals, including dogs, dragons, lions and the chimeras that Clémence loved so much



A late Ming porcelain vase (16th century) that, like many of the porcelains in the collection, is mounted on 18th-century French ormolu

bright red eyes, is cast in a cloudy glass to mimic a celadon finish. As a result it seems to throb in a slightly sinister light, the red glass eyes suggesting myxomatosis rather than good luck. For all its bad looks, it contains, however, another story of cultural exchange in the opposite direction from Clémence's fascination.

In the largest of the rooms is another example of this cultural exchange. Four large namban caskets rest upon faux-Chinese stands, glittering in the light. Each casket, surprisingly narrow until you realise that they are designed to travel on a ship, is inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The largest has a panel of shagreen or shark skin, in which the mother of pearl is inlaid. 'This shape is not at all Japanese,' says Baptiste. They were brought by Portuguese traders, who discovered Japan by mistake in the early 16th century, 'and they would come back with the object completely covered with lacquer, gilded lacquer and so on.' Baptiste offers a bracing summary of Portuguese/Japanese relations: 'Always the same questions of market and development of commercial relationships. The Portuguese would be happy to have commercial, direct

relationships with Japan. And the Japanese would be at first, very happy with that, because, for instance, the Portuguese provided them with guns. Actually, very rapidly, it provoked a disaster in Japanese history.'

Opportunity and societal collapse – entirely natural partners in the expensive light of the 16th arrondissement, next to the Bois de Boulogne, a stone's throw from the Fondation Louis Vuitton – are embodied in almost every object in the museum. Yet the museum is about to embark on its own precarious next chapter: a refurbishment and an expansion. The museum will close in the spring of next year as it takes care of vital elements such as the roof, but also build a new underground gallery for Japanese prints which will not affect the fabric of the current building but should attract a larger audience to an area of Paris not thought of for its museums.

The next challenge is how to turn the museum into a space that can accommodate more than a handful of visitors at any one time. The biggest problem is access during an emergency, something an extra staircase would solve. By good luck, the curators discovered unused architectural



The main gallery of the museum was designed to hold the netsuke collection. These are displayed on special ziggurat bases produced in consultation with Clémence



Vitrines designed by Gabriel Viardot (1830–1906), made with elements of Vietnamese wood inlaid with mother-of-pearl and inserted into a French furniture structure, display Clémence's collection

plans from the 1930s, shortly after the museum opened, to add in a staircase to the fourth gallery. Since the drawings already exist, the museum has been granted permission to build a staircase in this location. This means that over the next few months this sleeping beauty of a museum is also undergoing assessments and plans as the curators work out how to remove everything for the builders.

As Baptiste is pointing out where the new staircase will go, he points to a chandelier that currently hangs above the spot. He hopes that they will be able to keep it there. It is made of brass chimes and bells from a Buddhist

temple that have been incorporated into a 19th-century French light fitting, all curlicues and solid arms, their version of an East Asian design. In many ways it is the perfect emblem of this museum, which reveals a chauvinistic belief in the superiority of the acquiring culture, at the same time as a deep respect for others. Its surprising taxonomy leaves masterpieces in peace, available for generations to come.

For details on how to visit the Musée d'Ennery, go to www.guimet.fr.

FINE ASIAN ART

AUCTION: DECEMBER 8TH - 9TH 2025

VIEWING: DECEMBER 5TH - 7TH 2025, 10 AM - 5 PM



AN EXTREMELY RARE IMPERIAL BEIJING ENAMEL VASE AND COVER, CHINA, YONGZHENG FOUR-CHARACTER MARK AND OF THE PERIOD



A SUPERB PRESERVED IMPERIAL GILT BRONZE FIGURE OF AMITAYUS
CHINA, KANGXI PERIOD



A SUPERB BRONZE DING,
SHANG DYNASTY



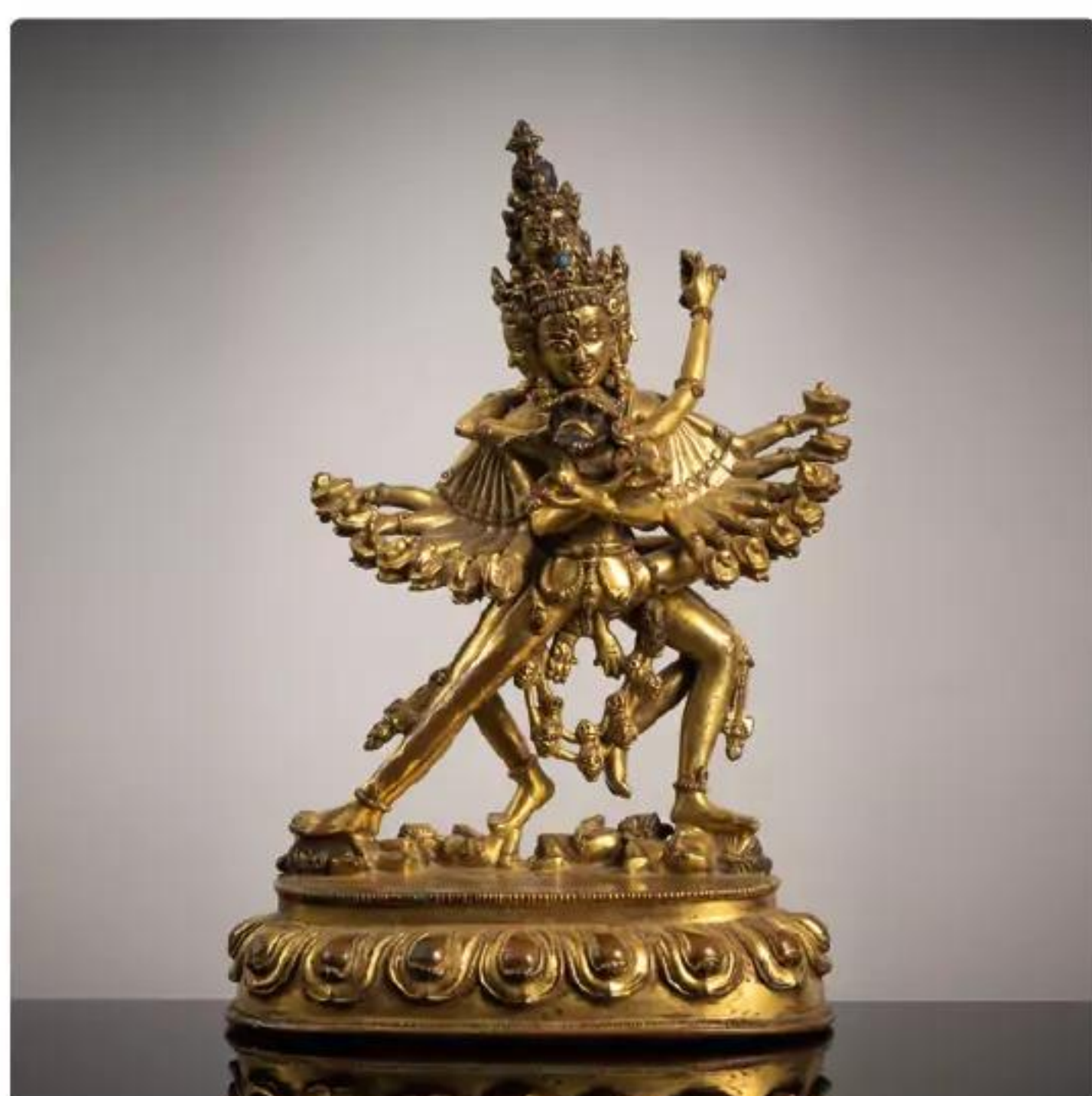
A FINE AND RARE WHITE-GROUND
IMPERIAL TEAPOT AND COVER
CHINA, DAOGUANG SEAL MARK AND PERIOD



A VERY FINE BRONZE GU,
SHANG DYNASTY



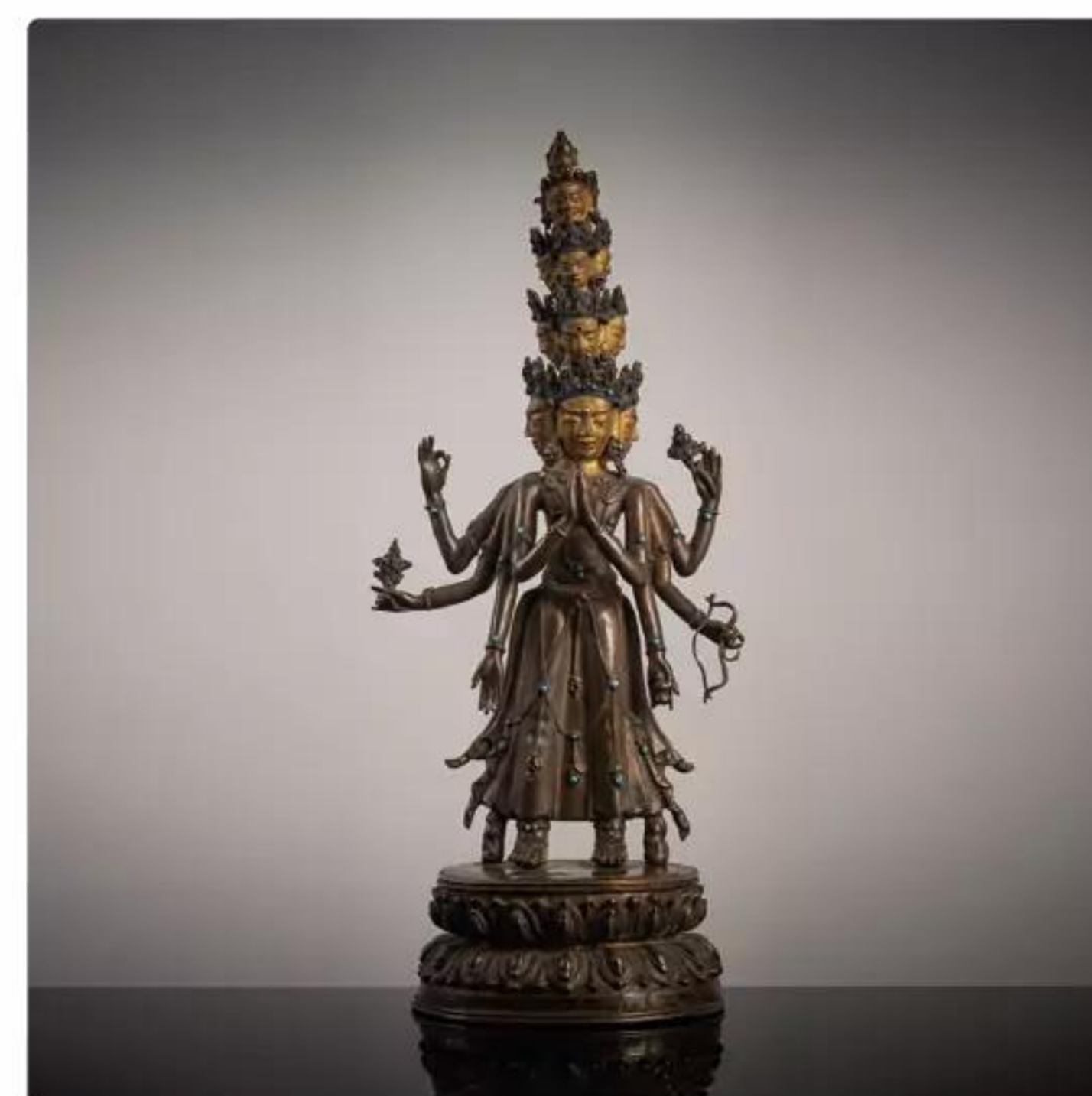
A VERY RARE BEIJING ENAMEL DOUBLE GOURD VASE
CHINA, YONGZHENG PERIOD



A FINE GILT-BRONZE FIGURE OF HEVAJRA
TIBET, 16TH CENTURY



A LARGE BRONZE FIGURE OF SHAKYAMUNI
TIBET, 16TH CENTURY



A RARE BRONZE OF EKADASHALOKESHVARA
TIBET, 16TH CENTURY

A LARGE GROUP OF BEIJING AND CANTON IMPERIAL ENAMEL WARES, PORCELAIN AND WORKS OF ART
FROM A EUROPEAN PRIVATE COLLECTION, FAMILY-OWNED BEFORE 1970, ORIGINALLY COLLECTED
IN THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICE IN CHINA IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY

CHINESE BRONZES FROM AN OLD GERMAN PRIVATE COLLECTION ASSEMBLED IN CHINA BETWEEN 1935 AND 1942

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MODERN ART

PIERRE-AUGUSTE RENOIR
L'ENFANT ET SES JOUETS - GABRIELLE ET LE FILS DE L'ARTISTE, JEAN
CHRISTOPHE JORON-DEREM, AUCTION ON 25 NOVEMBRE 2025

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The knowledge economy



A Connoisseur, 1817, Thomas Rowlandson (1757–1827), hand-coloured etching and aquatint, 14.8 × 23.5cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Computers and conceptual art haven't killed connoisseurship yet, writes **GEORGINA ADAM**

In September this year, the Art Business Conference held an interesting panel on connoisseurship, featuring three London dealers: Cornelia Grassi of the gallery greengrassi, Milo Dickinson, managing director of Dickinson, and Oliver Miro of Victoria Miro. The two latter are sons of the founders, carrying on a tradition established by their parents. Grassi is currently the chair of the Society of London Art Dealers, which includes both traditional and contemporary art galleries. She also comes from a family steeped in connoisseurship, so while she represents contemporary artists, she is no stranger to the Old Master world.

What is connoisseurship exactly? It is the trained judgement – and the word ‘trained’ is important – that allows someone to recognise the distinctive qualities of an artist’s hand, style, composition and the period in which a work was created. It also includes expertise on the art-historical context and work by other artists of the period.

One of the topics discussed at the conference was whether connoisseurship can be applied to contemporary art. In general, connoisseurship is thought of in the context of older works of art. Why? Because usually, with contemporary art, the artists themselves are around to give an opinion. When it comes to Old Masters or any work whose creator is no longer there to consult, authenticity can be decided by the classic methods: provenance, forensic examination of pigments and support, along with consultation of a catalogue raisonné.

But today, connoisseurship matters as much as ever – possibly even more in contemporary art, if only because of the sheer dominance of post-war and contemporary art, which remained the largest segment of the fine art auction market in 2024, according to the Art Basel & UBS report.

Miro tells me later: ‘Of course connoisseurship is important for contemporary art! It means really understanding the artists that we represent, understanding everything about

them and the context for their work. You need a wider understanding of the whole art world, and of art history. You need a deep knowledge of everything, why the artists made a work, how it fits into their *oeuvre* – even down to the markets, where those works were placed, where they are now, what museums have them. But there probably 20 different interpretations of that word!’

But Cornelia Grassi said: ‘I don’t even think connoisseurship is the right word; in a way it is an old-fashioned way of looking at things. People in Old Masters believe that this is their terrain, and only their terrain, whereas there are people in contemporary art that are extremely knowledgeable about, let’s say, the history of the works of certain artists from the 1950s.’ She continued: ‘When you think of a gallery like Metro Pictures’ – the now defunct New York gallery that represented Louise Lawler, Mike Kelley and Cindy Sherman, among others – ‘[they] worked with certain artists over 30 or 40 years and they had knowledge of every



Damien Hirst's *The Unknown (Explored, Explained, Exploded)*, in the Palms Casino resort, Las Vegas, is one of the works that the artist has been revealed to have dated incorrectly

single piece that those artists produced. These are very special relationships with artists – and they have nothing to do with the market and the financial value of the work.'

Connoisseurship in contemporary art is also important for the art market, and determining the importance of a particular piece within an artist's *oeuvre* can be crucial to its price. In addition, exploding values have also led to a rise in counterfeiting. In November 2024, more than 2,000 counterfeit Banksy pieces were seized in an investigation coordinated by the Italian police, who uncovered a sophisticated forgery network involving workshops in Italy and other European countries, including Spain, France and Belgium. In 2022 the Orlando Museum of Art saw its Jean-Michel Basquiat exhibition 'Heroes and Monsters' raided by the FBI and all 25 works of art on show impounded as fake.

Then there are artists who have apparently changed the dating of their work. Damien Hirst, for example – who is not the first to have done this – was found to have misdated four of his formaldehyde works, including *The Unknown (Explored, Explained, Exploded)*, which was

dated to 1999 but was in fact produced in 2017. Add to that the thorny question of assistants. While they have always existed, in recent years they have become more assertive, some claiming authorship and a share of the selling price: take the case brought by Michael Moi against glass artist Dale Chihuly or that brought by Daniel Druet against Maurizio Cattelan's galleries, both of which were dismissed. There is even the bizarre case of Peter Doig, forced to go to court to disclaim authorship of a painting which the owner said was done by the artist ('Pete Doige') as a student at a university he never attended (the judge ruled in favour of Doig). In all these instances, expertise was essential to determine who was right and who was wrong, and in some cases large amounts of money were at stake.

There are specific aspects of contemporary art which make connoisseurship more difficult. Art specialists trained in traditional media, who may be used to appraising style, technique, brushstrokes, patina on bronze and so on, may be less well equipped in cases of conceptual or post-modernist work where the 'quality' is not purely visual. And then there are ready-mades such as Duchamp's *Fountain* and many other

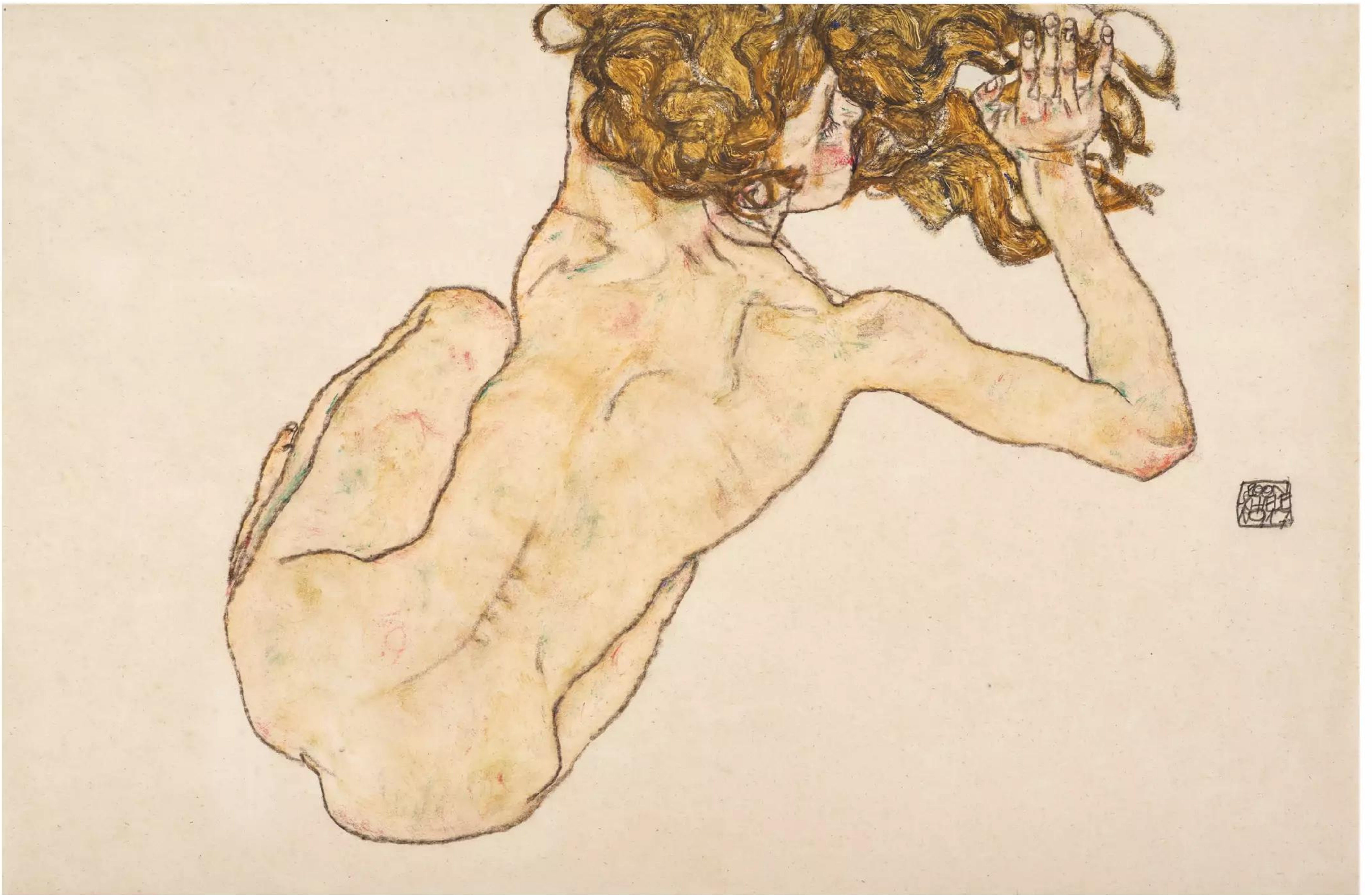
such repurposed items, where knowledge of the context is essential. Add to that the thorny subject of digital artworks, which might exist in multiple identical editions, or constructed situations, such as immaterial performances by Tino Sehgal. Here expertise shifts from visual analysis to understanding the concept and the protocols – but is no less important.

One final point was made by Oliver Miro, who expressed his worry that the internet is replacing connoisseurship. 'Fifteen or twenty years ago, people would seek out an expert in the field, go to a gallery or auction house,' he said: 'Now they might just go on social media look at how many "likes" an artist gets on Instagram [...] and if there are just a few, they could come to a wildly wrong conclusion. Artificial intelligence has almost become the authority, and people think it is always correct,' he said: 'It's incredibly dangerous and undermining the very notion of connoisseurship, in all the sectors, older art and contemporary.'

Georgina Adam's most recent book is *The Rise and Rise of the Private Art Museum (Lund Humphries)*.

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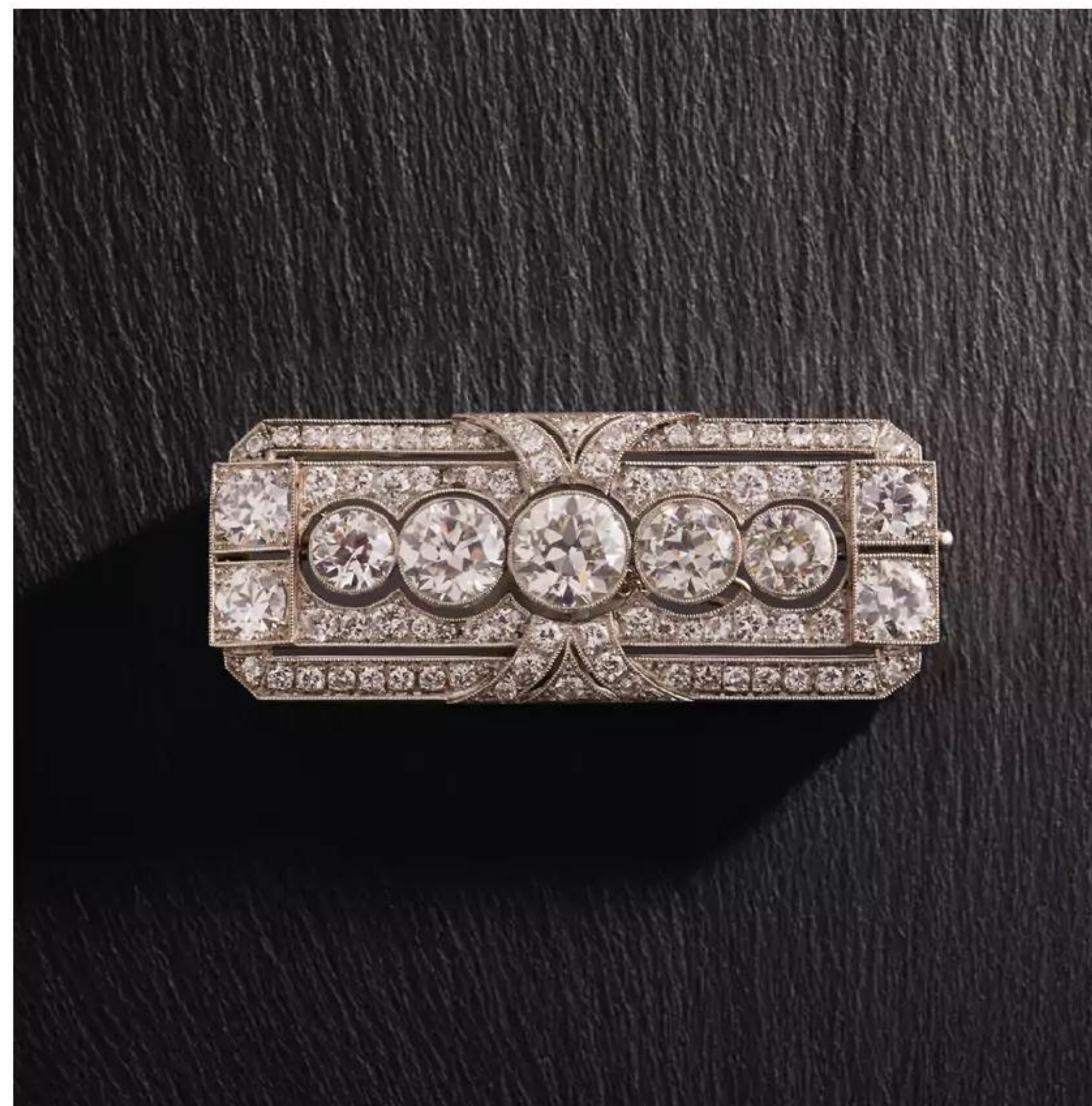
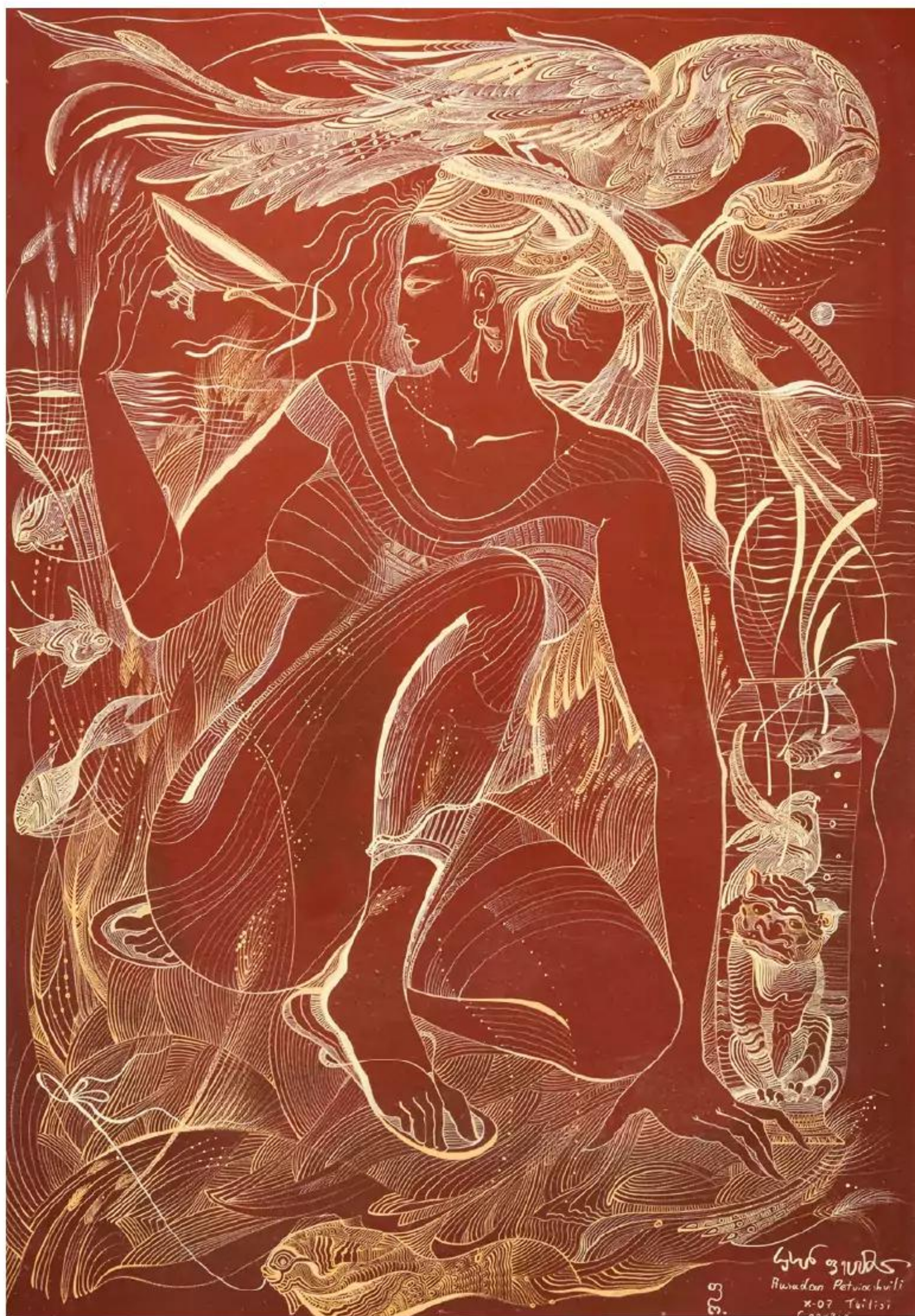
Egon Schiele, Crouching Nude, Back View, 1917, gouache and black crayon on paper, 29.5 x 45 cm, €1,800,000 – 2,500,000, Auction 18 November 2025

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From the top clockwise: Fritz Winter, "Unruhe zwischen Schwarz" (unrest among black), 1953, mixed media (oil and chalk) / paper, 47 x 67 cm | Keith Haring, Without title (Cup man), from the portfolio: "Kinderstern" (Children's Star), 1989, color silkscreen print/cardboard. 84/100. 73.4 x 52.5 cm. | High-quality Art Deco Brooch, approx. 15 ct Diamonds in Platinum, c. 1915 | Rusudan Petviashvili, "The Woman", 2007, Tempera/ canvas, 100 x 69.5 cm

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FINE ART AUCTIONS

Early Japanese porcelain

Polychrome pieces from the 17th and 18th centuries are full of beauty and variety – and there are bargains to be had, writes **EMMA CRICHTON-MILLER**



A Kakiemon figure of a *bijin*, late 17th century, Edo period, Japan, porcelain and enamel, ht 39cm. Sotheby's, sold for £35,280

In 1656, the Dutch East India Company – since 1639 the only Europeans allowed to trade with Japan – ordered from its contacts in Nagasaki a shipment of Japanese porcelain. Before 1644, Europe's appetite for this 'white gold' had been fed by Chinese porcelain; but the chaos following the fall of the Ming Dynasty in 1644 had made supply chains unreliable. News had reached the company that Japanese porcelain was also highly regarded and had become attuned to European tastes. Thus began a busy trade. By the time exports from China began again in 1683, the lucrative market in a distinctive Japanese style of enamelled porcelain was so well established that the Chinese themselves began to imitate it.

Japanese porcelain-making was then a young art form. In the 1590s, Japanese feudal lords invading Korea had seized potters as part of their booty – Korean ceramics were held in high esteem and they wished to establish an industry at home. The Nabeshima lord, for instance, took Korean potters back to his province of Hizen on Kyūshū, the southern-most of Japan's main islands, where they introduced a simple form of wheel-thrown stoneware, alongside the *noborigama* (climbing kiln) for more controllable firing. After a clay suitable for porcelain was discovered in the Arita district of Hizen in 1616, these Korean potters, led by Ri Sampei (also known by the Korean version of his name, Yi Sam-p'yong), began to develop a local style of porcelain known as Imari, after the port from which it was shipped.

Early Japanese porcelain is characterised by a coarse, grainy texture; the designs, painted in cobalt blue or iron oxide on a white ground and coated in a transparent glaze, are admired for their fluidity. Drips and fingermarks on the base, in contrast to the immaculate contemporary wares from Southern China, give them vitality. In the 1640s, influenced by Chinese polychrome wares, the Arita potters began making porcelain with enamelled decoration and before 1656 were adapting their forms and motifs to suit European traders sailing out of Nagasaki.

Between 1660 and 1680, with a booming international market, they developed a palette of bright green, brick red, yellowish brown, light aubergine and overglaze blue, with minimal underglaze blue marking, and a range of motifs including trees and flowering plants, river scenes and landscapes, birds, occasionally animals or figures.

Myriad enterprises in Arita developed a variety of forms and objects to suit markets from the Philippines via the Middle East to Western Europe. The Dutch would send earthenware examples of what they wanted, inspired by Chinese porcelain and Delftware. Out of this early phase came distinct strands, including Ko-Kutani wares, with pieces that have a marked individuality. In the 1650s Kakiemon ware emerged, with refined and sophisticated use of brightly coloured asymmetrical decoration on a blank background. Kakiemon ware is attributed largely to a single family kiln, with production and quality reaching a peak between 1670 and 1710. Its popularity led other kilns to copy it, while Dutch enamellers decorated blanks in imitation, making attribution difficult. In the final quarter of the 17th century a different style emerged, with complex, brightly coloured decoration, using iron red and underglaze blue, drawing on Chinese motifs, with frequent lavish gilding. These Imari wares suited the taste of 17th-century Europe. After 1690, however, trade restrictions made Japanese examples prohibitively expensive for Europeans, so Western potteries produced their own versions – Meissen in Germany; Spode, Chelsea, Derby, Worcester and Minton in England.

Alongside all these, a line of Nabeshima wares made in a variety of kilns in 1675 in Okawachiyama were produced exclusively for the Nabeshima lord. This ware, with its elegant, spare design, employing a limited palette of cobalt blue, celadon and iron ore, was primarily reserved for gifts to the Tokugawa Shogun, Japan's supreme leader during the Edo period (1603–1868). It reached its peak of excellence at the turn of the 18th century.

Although many of the original kilns continue to this day, collectors focus on early

COLLECTORS' FOCUS

pieces from around 1620–1720. In the 1980s, the market reached a high as Japanese buyers, riding an economic boom, acquired outstanding examples from Western private collections. Malcolm Fairley, a leading London-based specialist in Japanese art, recalls a sale in 1989 at Sotheby's in London at which many pieces fetched more than £100,000. But the market collapsed when the Japanese economic bubble burst in 1991. Values held for extremely rare early pieces in excellent condition with undisputed provenance, if at a lower level. In September 1999 at Christie's New York, a large Arita ware porcelain jar painted with pheasants and flowering peony, dated 1660–80, achieved \$112,500 against a wide \$100,000–\$150,000 estimate. In March 2000, at the same house, a Nabeshima-ware piece fetched \$57,500 – well over the upper estimate; and in 2005 at Bonhams San Francisco, a colourful Edo-period Arita-ware Kakiemon-style octagonal porcelain jar sold for \$76,000. In 2015 a fine Nabeshima dish from the late 17th or early 18th century, sold for £56,250 (estimate £50,000–£70,000) at Christie's London. Fairley notes that a large Kakiemon blue-and-white dish from the Avo Krikorian collection sold in 2007 at Christie's Zurich for CHF22,800 (roughly £10,000): 'We bought it at Sotheby's in November 2018 for £16,000 plus premium (£20,000). A negligible increase for

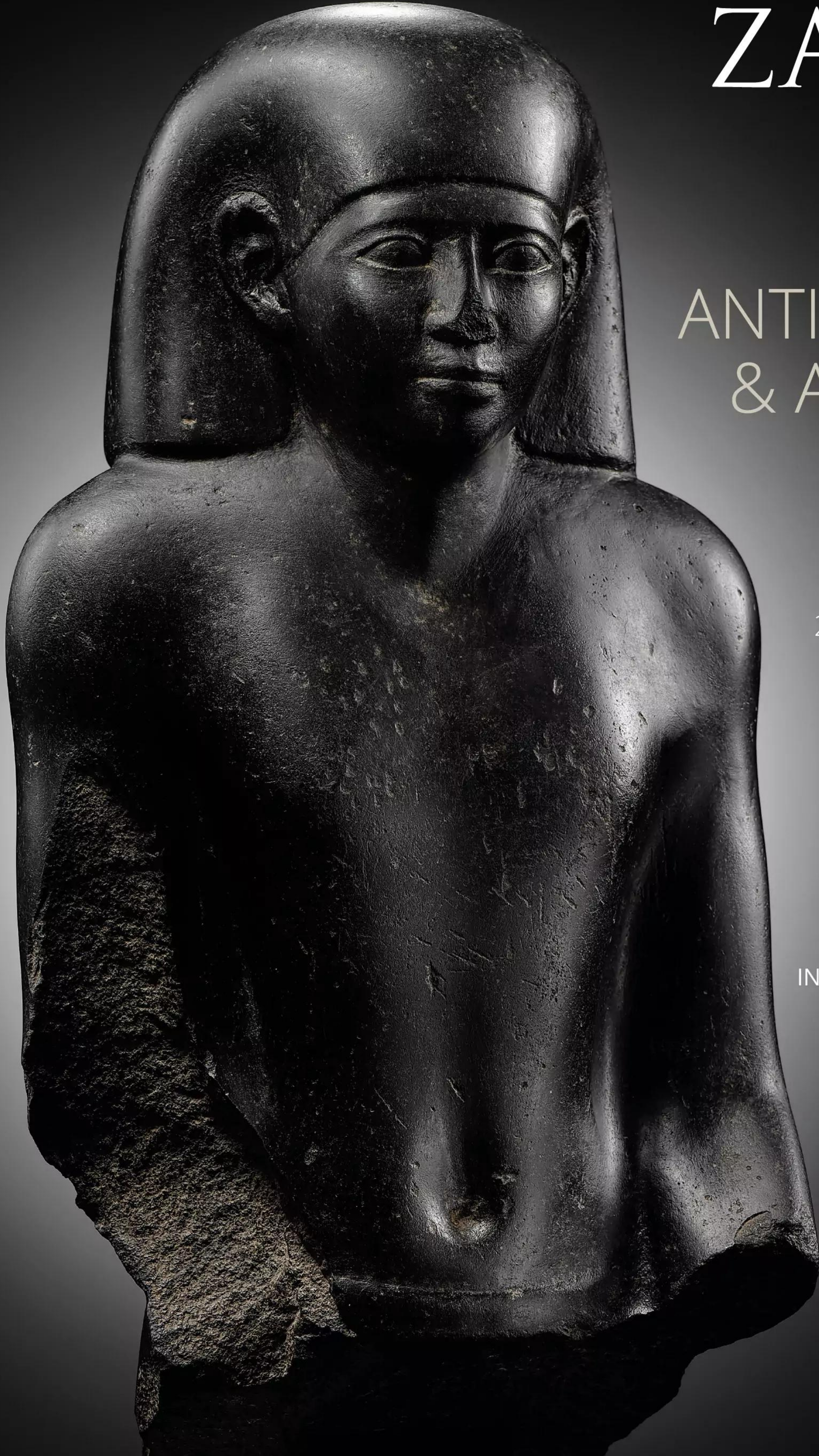
such a fine piece.' Other items fetch a fraction of their former value, with fine 17th-century Japanese porcelain now available from the low thousands. Fairley suggests that Kakiemon figures of *bijins* – beauties – and other characters do have a market. In November 2021 a late 17th-century *bijin* achieved £35,280 – more than £15,000 over the upper estimate, an identical price to a late 17th-century Kokutani gourd-shaped sake flask in the same sale. In 2019, however, a pair of Kakiemon models of *karako* (Chinese boys) seated on Go boards from the late 17th century, with French 18th-century gilt-bronze mounts, was put up for auction at Sotheby's London with an estimate of £250,000–£350,000, but did not sell.

Anthony Gray of London-based Guest and Gray is more positive, arguing that the market at a lower level is gaining new momentum as prices for Chinese porcelain spiral upwards. He notes that collectors pursue rarity and an interesting form or story, such as the blue-and-white Arita ware tea pot with a European seascape (c. 1720), which he has available for £22,000. Robert McPherson, a dealer newly returned to the UK, has a special admiration for the very early porcelain from 1620–50, when 'they were really experimenting'. He has observed collector interest in this period growing over the last 10 years: 'It is interesting

to Westerners because the style is undiluted by Western taste.' There is also a lively internal market in Japan for these works. Hans van Baarsen of Pater Gratia Oriental Art says that it is difficult to track the contemporary market because it happens behind the scenes, between dealers and passionate collectors. In his specialist area, 17th- and 18th-century blue-and-white Arita ware, he has no problem finding buyers for the rare, authentic pieces he pursues. But the scramble to copy Japanese examples in both China and Europe in the 18th century means that secure attribution is difficult: 'The term Imari is very widespread but nobody knows what it means.' Once attribution is secure however, 'There is a market for early pieces, 1690–1700, with underglaze blue. It is very distinctive. And with Arita blue-and-white ware from the 1650s until 1710.' He notes a current focus on the rarest early examples of Kakiemon without underglaze blue: 'I found an enamel dish with no underglaze. That becomes more than \$10,000.' There is also a market for unusual later pieces with Dutch armorials, for instance. He sells primarily within Europe and the UK, to private collectors and to institutions, but also further afield. As he puts it, 'First people buy coloured Chinese porcelain, then they buy Chinese blue-and-white. Then they get to Japanese blue-and-white.'



Arita blue and white teapot, c. 1720, Edo period, Japan, porcelain, 12 x 19cm. Guest and Gray (£22,000)



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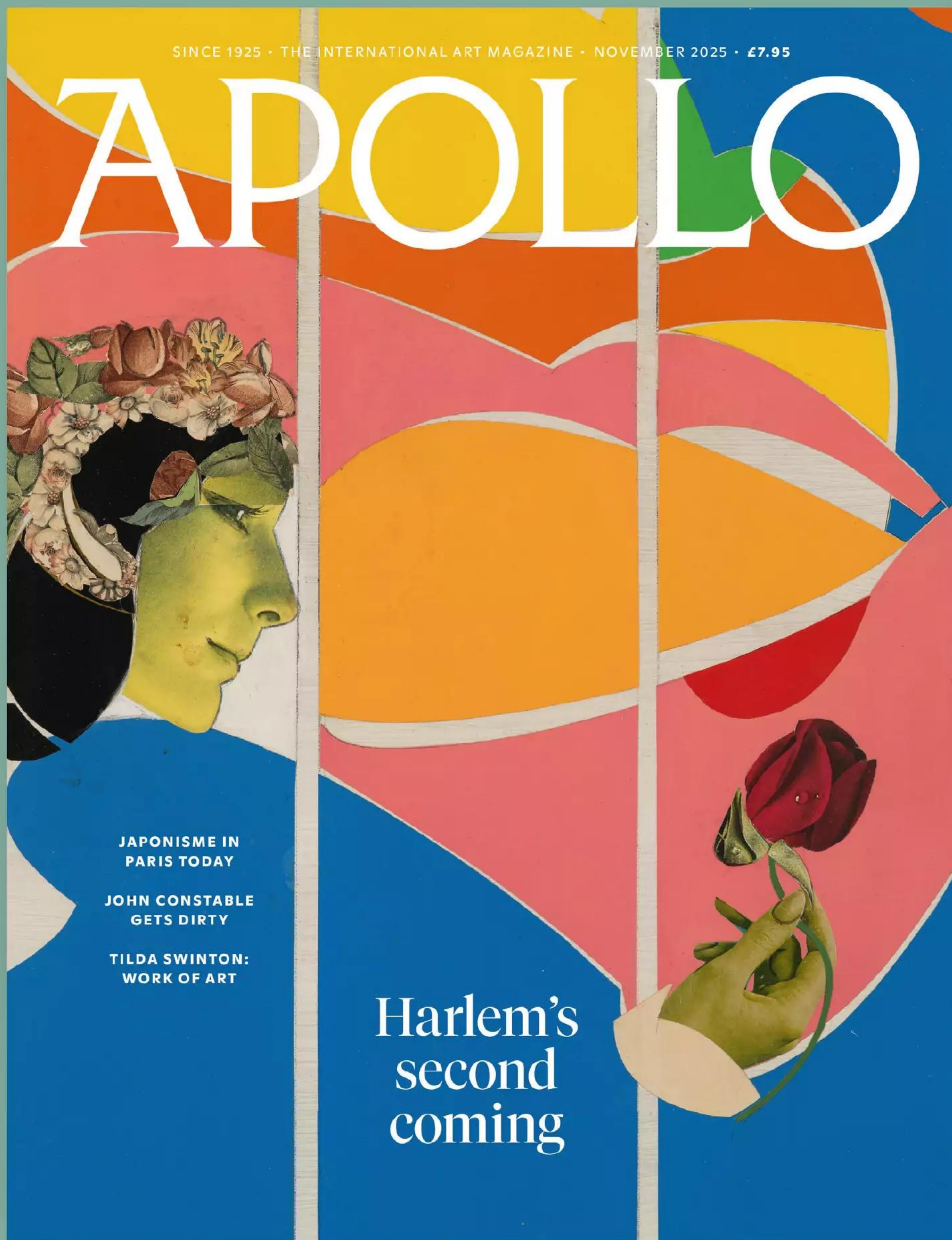
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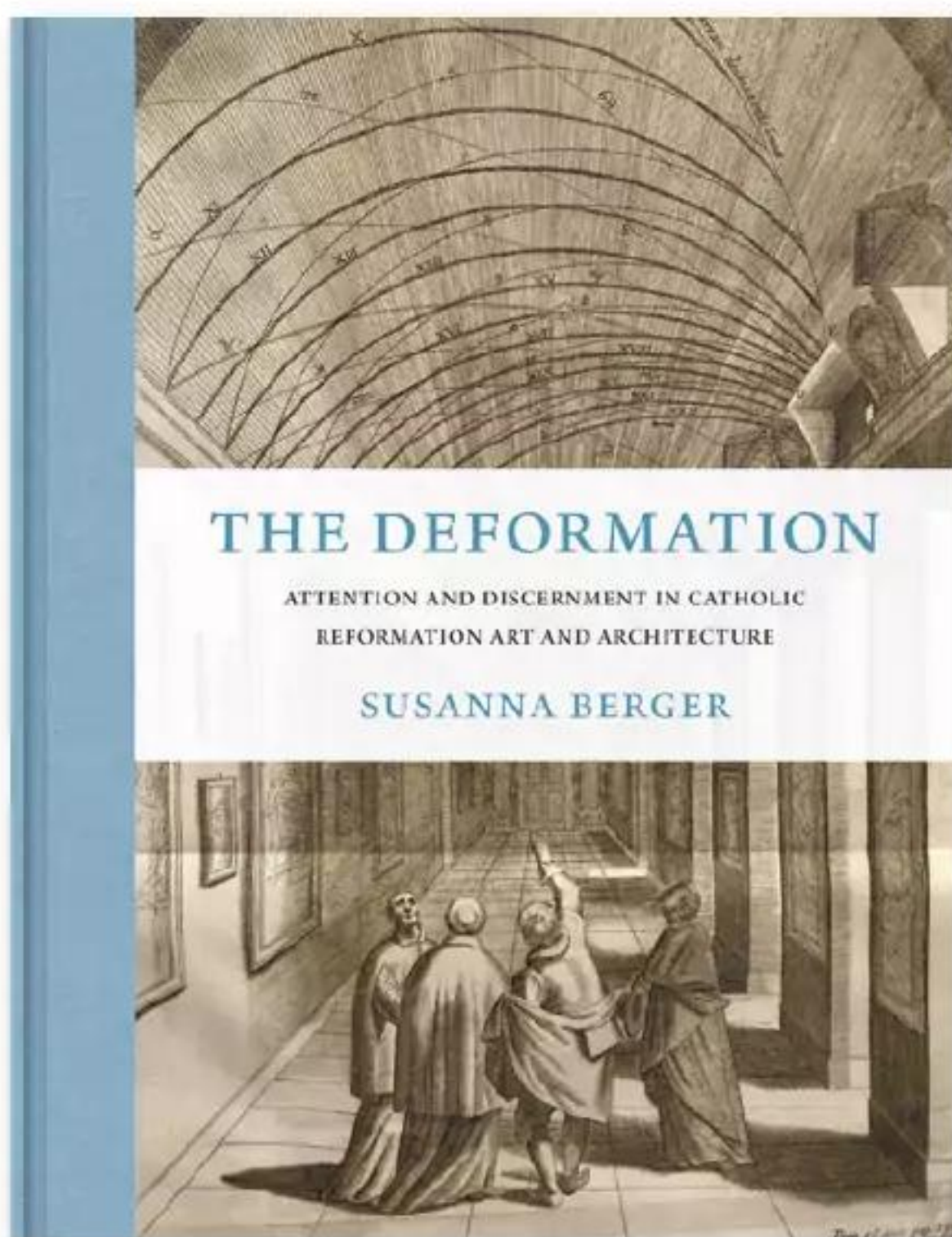
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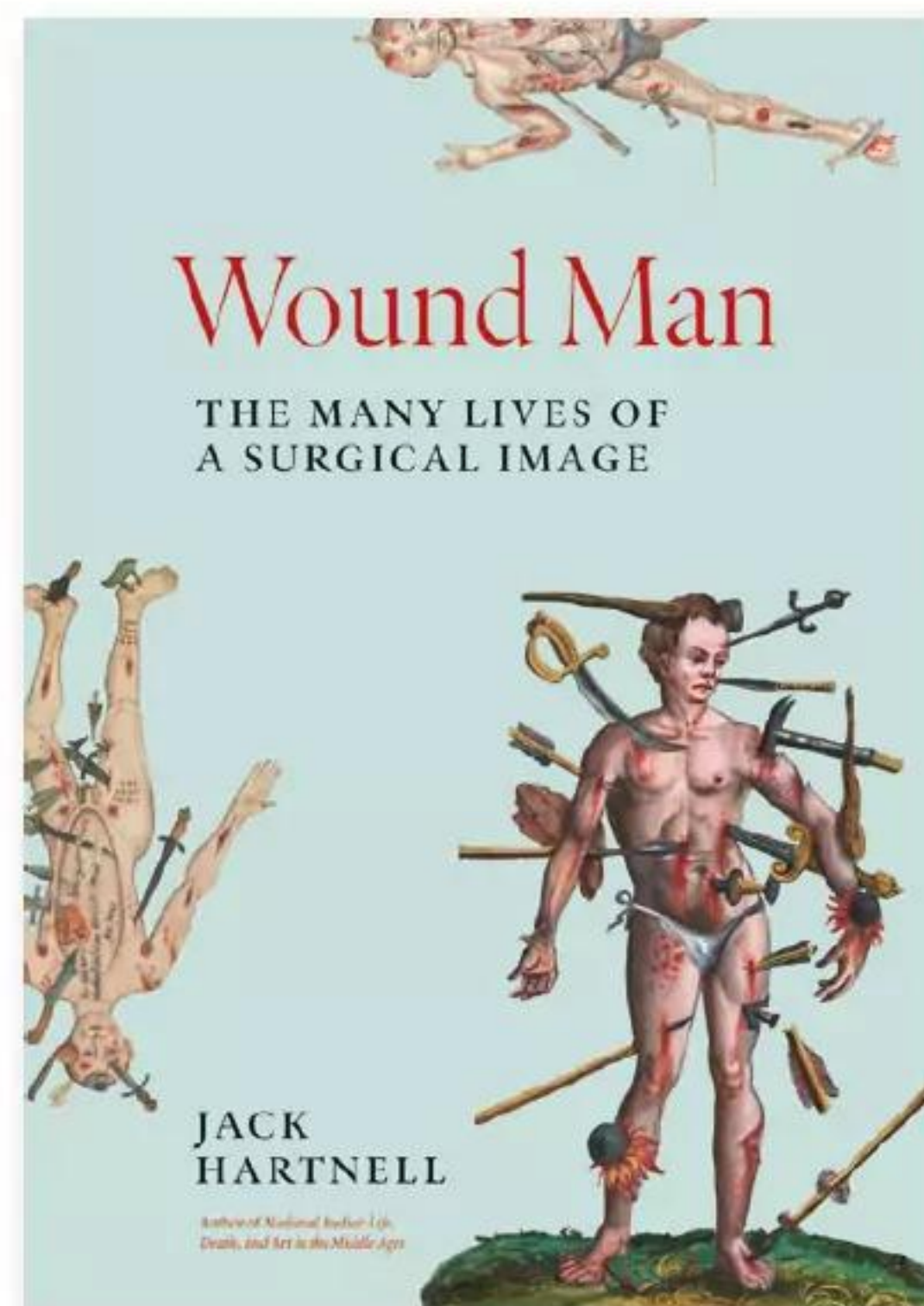
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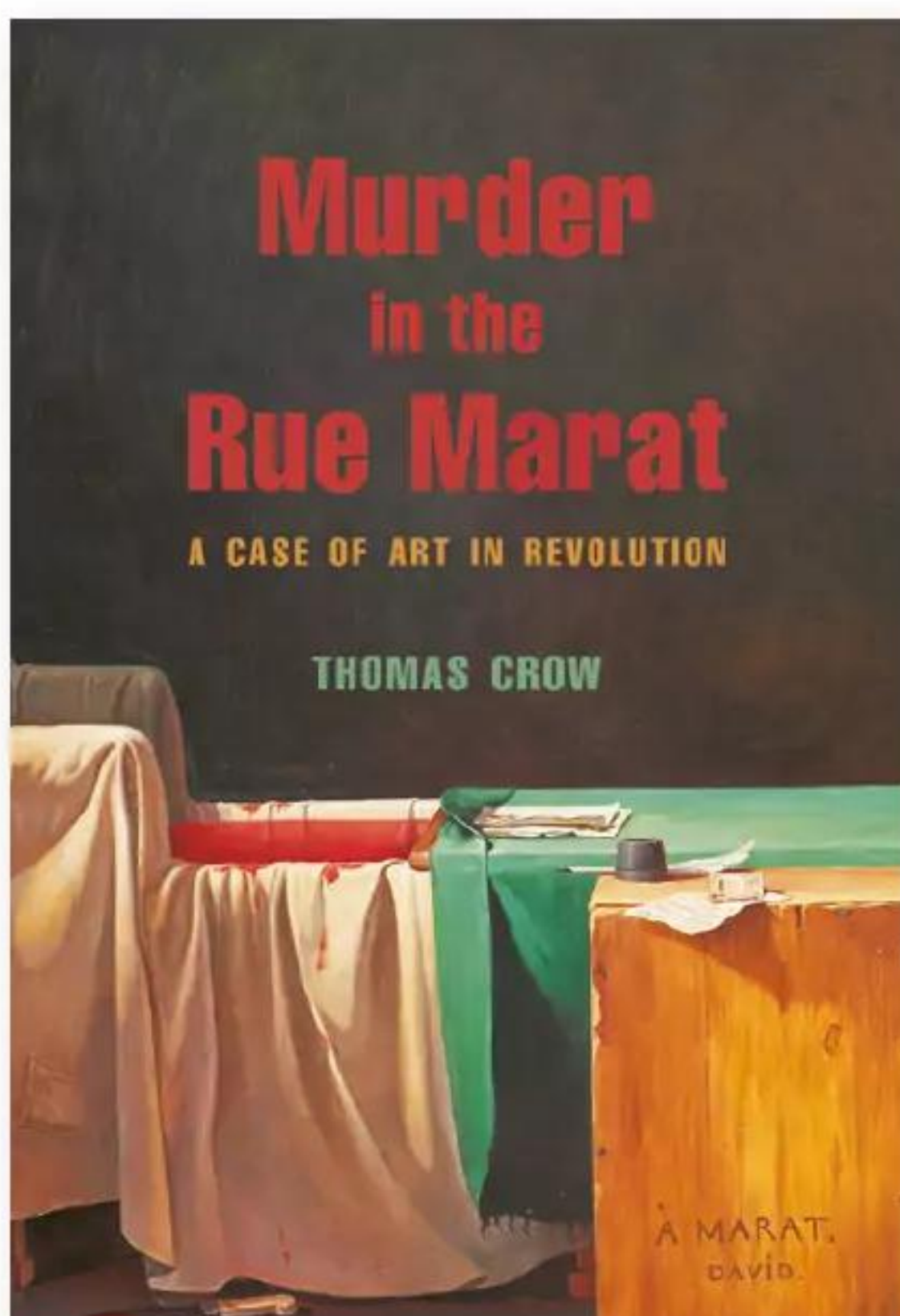
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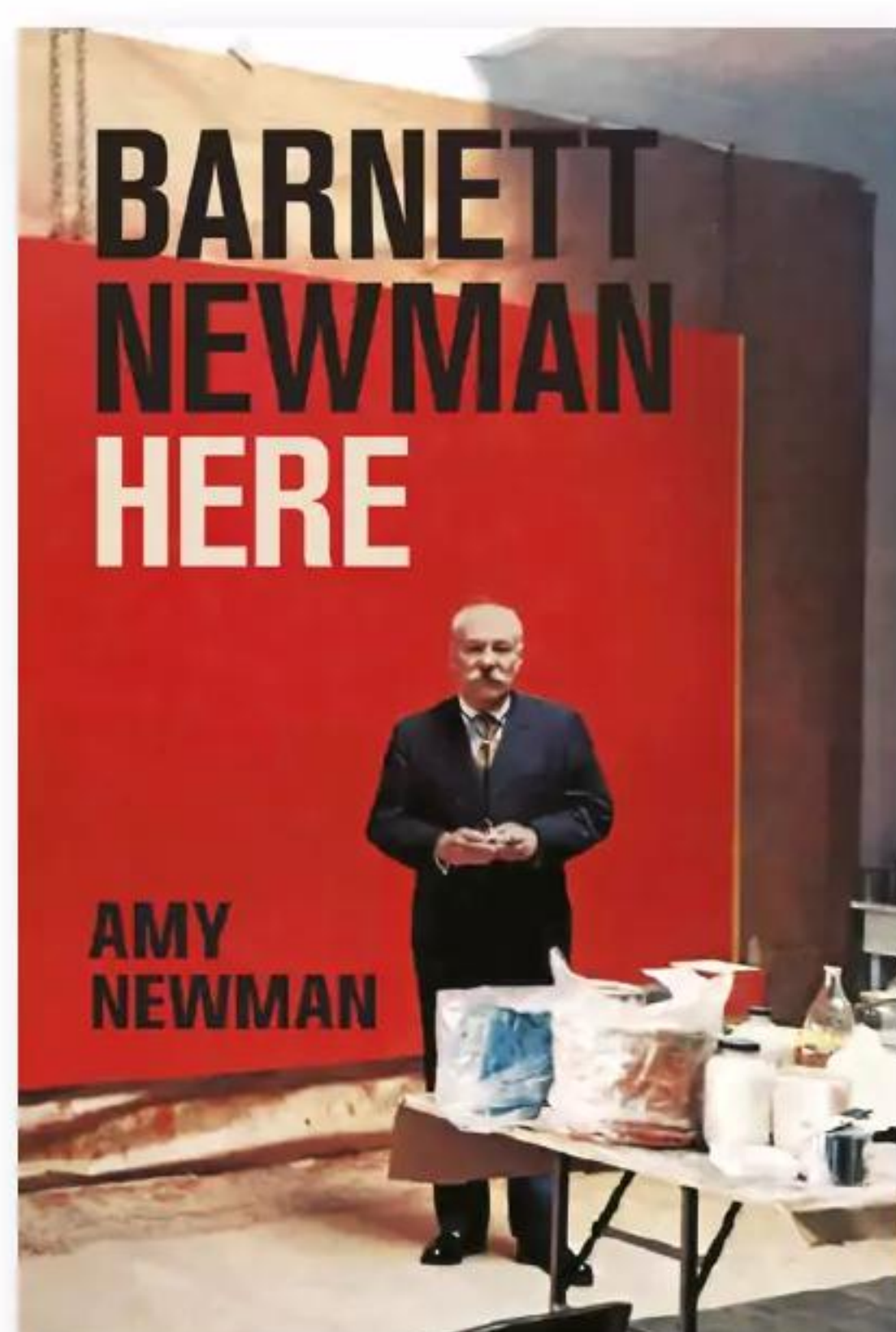
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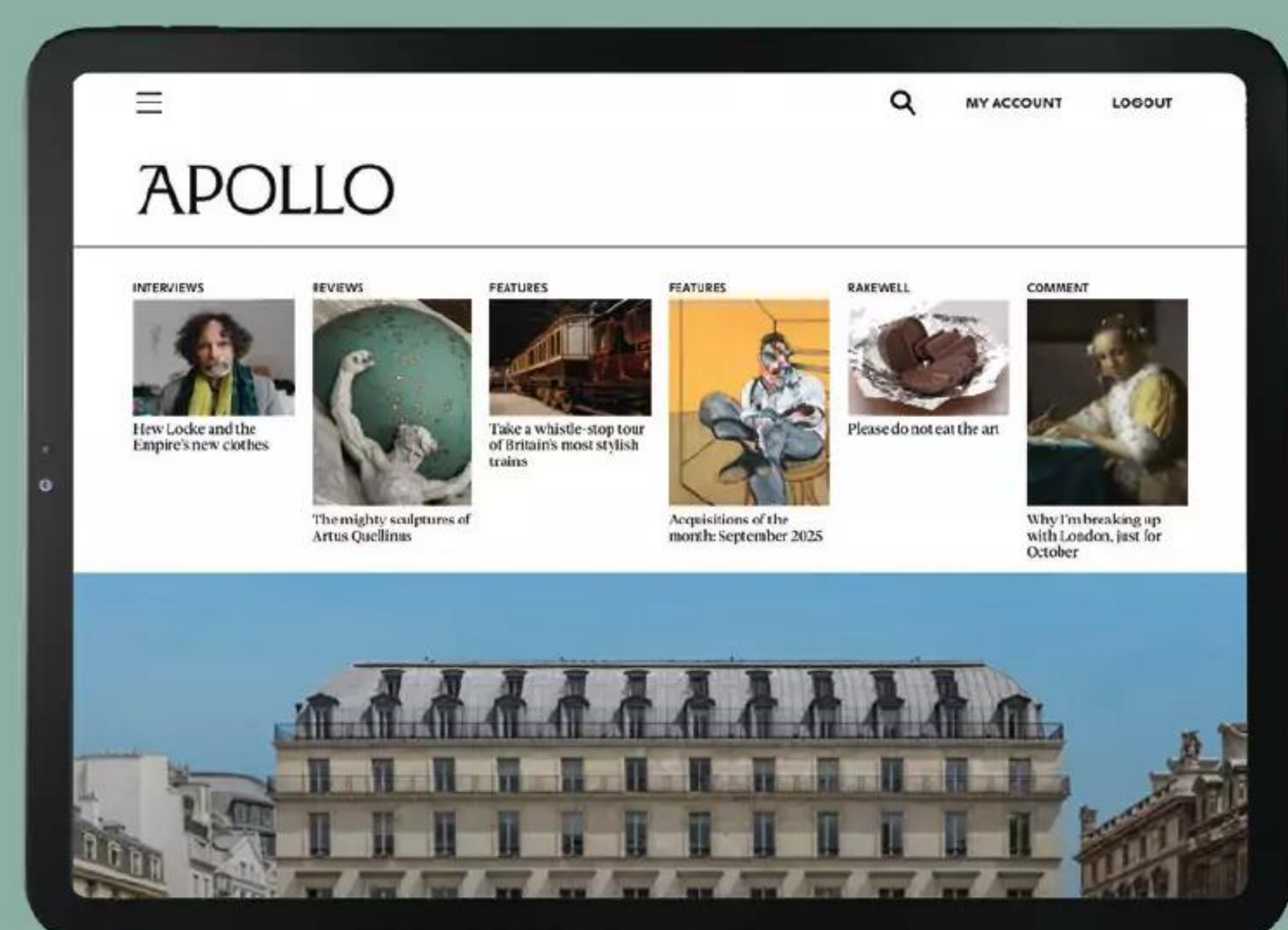
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REVIEWS

EXHIBITIONS REDISCOVERING MICHAELINA WAUTIER, KERRY JAMES MARSHALL STARS IN LONDON, EDWARD GEORGE TURNS ARCHIVIST **BOOKS** ALBERT BARNES'S VORACIOUS APPETITE FOR ART, AND A MENAGERIE OF STONE MONSTERS IN ITALY



The Triumph of Bacchus, 1655/59, Michaelina Wautier (1614–89), oil on canvas, 271.5 × 355.5cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna



The Five Senses: Smell, 1650, Michaelina Wautier (c. 1614–89), oil on canvas, 69.5 × 61cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Portrait of a lady on fire

Michaelina Wautier – Painter

30 September–22 February 2026

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

It's time we knew more about one of the most significant female painters in the history of art, writes **LUKE UGLOW**

Hold your nose. Something smells. A rotten egg. You can almost see the foul vapour rising from the shell. A boy pinches his nostrils, concealing his mouth, and meets our gaze with an inscrutable stare. The paintings comprising Michaelina Wautier's philosophical reflection, *The Five Senses* (1650), certainly have a mischievous quality. In another, a knife rests on a table, blood drips from a boy's hand, his strange face contorted in an expression of pain and annoyance. A boy tries to play his recorder but is distracted; another takes a sly bite of buttered bread. One last boy holds a pair of glasses to his eyes, peering inquisitively at the palm of his hand. These five witty, masterfully painted works resurfaced from a private collection only in 2020. Signed and dated by Wautier, they cement her newly established reputation as one of the most significant female painters in the history of art.

The 'rediscovery' of Wautier and the impressive reconstruction of her career by the art historian Katlijne Van der Stighelen over the last 30 years have reached their culmination in an exhibition at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, which travels to the Royal Academy in London next spring. Why an artist of such outstanding talent and originality should have been ignored for more than three centuries is obvious – because she was a woman. What is more surprising, perhaps, is despite feminist scholarship confronting patriarchal biases since the 1970s, a great painter like Wautier, with works in world-famous museums, should have continued to go unnoticed. Nevertheless, after a landmark exhibition in Antwerp in 2018 and now this more complete show in Vienna, there can be no doubt about Michaelina Wautier's status as a great artist.

Probably born around 1614 in Mons, in modern-day Belgium, very little of Wautier's life is documented. She came from a large, wealthy, intellectually well-connected family. Her brother Charles was also a painter. The siblings lived together and likely shared

a studio in Brussels. Neither married. Michaelina's first dated work is a portrait known from a print of 1643, her last an Annunciation from 1659. She lived for another 28 years, dying in her early to mid seventies.

The paintings are those of a skilful, ambitious and varied artist; this exhibition has examples of almost every genre: portraits, still life, history paintings. We find a persistent and surprising corporeal quality, especially in the sensual rendering of skin. Wautier is fascinated by figures of various ages, from little boys, to mature men, to old women. These are bought into close proximity in the colourful *Education of the Virgin* (1656), which contrasts the tender yet furrowed face of Saint Anne with the youthful bloom of Mary. Dirty fingernails in the *Boys Blowing Bubbles* (c. 1650–55), translucent wings and feathery petals in the *Flower Garland with a Dragonfly* (1652), a hairy waterskin in *Portrait of a Man as the Biblical Jacob* (c. 1655). All around are physical, sensual surfaces. This quality extends to the surface of the paintings themselves with their variety of brushwork and finish, which is at times fluid, choppy, layered. Yet there also seems to be an emotional and intellectual depth which we are only just beginning to fathom.

Despite the exhibition's title, there are in fact two artists on display. Charles Wautier was a professional portrait painter, who also produced religious narratives and large-scale altarpieces. He may not have had the natural talent of his sister, but he was an accomplished and successful artist as seen in the nine paintings and 10 prints on display here. Charles was four years older than Michaelina and his earliest dated work is from 1650, the year before he joined the painters' guild in Brussels. The exact relationship between their work is difficult to define, although there are similarities in their style, materials and working methods. The exhibition suggests that Michaelina's hand can be detected in both *The Calling of Saint Matthew* (c. 1655–65) and *Christ Among the Doctors* (c. 1650–65).

Catalogue by Gerlinde Gruber, Katlijne Van der Stighelen, Julien Domercq (eds.)
ISBN 9781915815200, €39.95
(Kunsthistorisches Museum/Royal Academy)

The Kunsthistorisches Museum's own *The Triumph of Bacchus* (c. 1655–59) is held up as Michaelina Wautier's masterpiece and was the painting that first inspired Van der Stighelen's quest to uncover the artist. A spectacular exercise in variations of the male nude, it is an intensification of the variety and corporeality seen throughout Wautier's *oeuvre*: a unique achievement at a time when women were forbidden from studying nudes.

The *Bacchus* appears in the 1659 inventory of the famous collection of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm of Austria, governor of the Spanish Netherlands in this period, where it is attributed to 'N. Woutiers'. Causing more confusion, three other paintings belonging to the archduke are listed as by 'Magdalena Woutiers' – the name of Michaelina's sister. In 1967 the curator Günther Heinz first argued that all four were by Michaelina, but the paintings and their author continued to be ignored. Strangely, the *Bacchus* is not signed by Michaelina and there are parallels between some figures and a *Young Bacchus* by Charles in the National Gallery, Prague (not exhibited). Even so, during a workshop in 2024, experts reached the conclusion that *The Triumph of Bacchus* is entirely the work of Michaelina.

The exhibition features some disappointing works, however, including a *Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine* (signed and dated 1649), which, despite restoration, is still in poor condition. Because of works by Michaelina herself being very limited in number, they are augmented by some more or less successful comparisons with paintings by other artists, including Anthony van Dyck. Her extraordinary, psychologically intense portrait of the Jesuit missionary Martino Martini (1654), who had recently returned from 10 years in China, is displayed alongside historical examples of the Chinese costume he wears.

Most compelling of all is Wautier's powerful and challenging self-portrait (c. 1650). Sat majestically at her easel, she has started to sketch a figure on the canvas. In a type of negative illusion, the ground has been left uncovered, meaning we look at the canvas of the picture itself; there is so much more to learn about Michaelina Wautier and her art.

Luke Uglow is a curator and art historian.

Mix master

Kerry James Marshall: The Histories

20 September–18 January 2026

Royal Academy of Arts, London

This strangest of American painters has more than earned his place in the canon, writes

DIGBY WARDE-ALDAM

Kerry James Marshall's retrospective at the Royal Academy presents the visitor with any number of surprises. Chief among them is the emphatically academic hang, in an arrangement that wouldn't look out of place in the grander galleries of the Louvre or the Prado. It confronts us with mostly symmetrical arrangements of paintings, some immense in scale, smaller ones grouped in tidy batches, with little deviation from a form of display entirely foreign to contemporary painting. It also follows an almost entirely chronological course, addressing 11 major cycles of the artist's work and swerving the 'thematic' mix-and-match strategy deployed in so many recent mid-career retrospectives. As if the point couldn't be made any louder, it opens with a selection of paintings depicting studio settings and museum galleries much like the one we find ourselves in, filled with Black visitors; they're grouped together under the title 'The Academy'.

You're left in no doubt that there's an agenda here, one that follows the wider arc of Marshall's career. His *oeuvre*, in the simplest of tellings, can be read as a monumental effort to assert the presence of the Black figure in the story of Western art, using painterly idioms taken from that canon. He has sustained this mission for four decades, in the process becoming the closest thing contemporary painting has to a canonical figure himself, and is deservedly seen as a godfather to a generation of African-American figurative painters who followed him.

Yet while his art can't be completely dissociated from questions of race or art-historical reference, understanding it exclusively through those prisms seems reductive, if not downright daft. What that reading misses is the sheer oddness of Marshall's vision, and the inventive visual gambits he deploys in order to mediate it.

As the show's title suggests, Marshall has a particular interest in the once-privileged genre of history painting, a mode he has been

repurposing and occasionally subverting since at least the 1990s. The most arresting examples on display here explore grand historical narratives through microcosmic settings, rendering them on unstretched canvas at heroic scale. Consider the barbershop – an emblematic space of 'sanctuary' for the African-American community in Los Angeles – imagined in *De Style* (1993), in which a calendar hanging on the wall indicates the date of Rodney King's beating at the hands of the LAPD; or the domestic scenes in the *Souvenir* series (1997), all of which are decorated with homages to deceased heroes of the Civil Rights movement – some diegetic (wall hangings with a distinctly home-made touch); some less anchored in realism, captured as clouds of text or screen-printed images hovering at the upper fringes of the pictorial space.

It could all come dangerously close to gimmickry – or worse, agitprop – were the artist less firmly wedded to keeping things interesting. Look at that barbershop again, past the direct, confrontational gaze of the four male figures within, and your eyes meet what should be a chaos of painterly reference, snaking lines and consumer product labelling: the laminate floor has the scratchy texture of an amateur woodcut, jarring against the neat arrangement of cabinets and furniture in primary colours.

Mondrian is very much in the picture here, as the title implies, in competition with a profusion of painted and collaged imagery that would have sent the Dutch artist into fits. Meanwhile, the tangled stems of a houseplant rhyme with an unruly black ceiling pipe, a line on a walk rudely interrupted by a dual-headed fitting. Few details in the composition feel obvious or, in some instances, anything more than incidental, but the parts add up to a barnstorming whole.

This approach is, at times, overwhelming. Marshall's paintings of the mid 1990s introduce a number of motifs that push the compositions into almost whimsical territory: the Warhol-esque blooms and Disneyfied

bluebirds swarming across the foreground of *Watts, 1963* (1995), an idealised and unusually self-referential vision of the Los Angeles housing project where the artist lived in his youth; or, in *Past Times* (1997), the Snoop Dogg and Temptations lyrics spilling from a portable radio like the speech scrolls in Rogier van der Weyden's *Braque Triptych*. *Past Times* – think *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* but transplanted to a Southside Chicago park – just about holds the attention through some less obviously attention-grabbing details: the exquisitely rendered pebble-dash coating a municipal bin, say, or an arc illustrating the swing of a golf club. *Watts, 1963* communicates something altogether more mysterious, messy impasto caked over the prim lawn and neat facades of the housing. Here is a lament for utopian ideals of post-war living.

More recently, Marshall has reined things in, but outbreaks of the bonkers still keep surfacing. *School of Beauty, School of Culture* (2012) brings us back to the salon, but this time the patrons and clientele are women. If the way these figures are dressed doesn't seem entirely naturalistic, small wonder: Marshall, according to an essay by Madeleine Grynsztejn in the superb exhibition catalogue, designed them himself, making actual garments with a Singer and modelling them on dolls he used as references for the composition. It reinforces the painting's already palpable sense of realism bleeding into full-on irreality: it variously contains a series of glitter-edged, heart-shaped mirrors, a likeness of Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* warped to the dimensions of the hovering skull in Holbein's *The Ambassadors* and even a faithfully transposed poster for Chris Ofili's 2010 retrospective at Tate Britain. Overhead lighting casts strobe-like rays as one woman breaks into a spontaneous dance.

Marshall can be solemn, portentous, improbable, joyous and slyly funny, sometimes within the space of a single canvas, mixing registers and messages to the extent that his paintings escape any simple, narrative reading. The Academy may have been an aspiration, but he is far too interesting an artist to be confined to it.

Digby Warde-Aldam is a freelance art critic.

Catalogue by Mark Godfrey (ed.)

ISBN 9781915815125

Hardback, £40

(Royal Academy of Arts)



Souvenir II, 1997, Kerry James Marshall (b. 1955), acrylic, collage, and glitter on unstretched canvas banner, 274.3 × 304.8cm. Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover



Installation view of 'Edward George: Black Atlas' at the Warburg Institute, London

Photo: Stephen White & Co. Courtesy the Warburg Institute

Moving images

Edward George: Black Atlas

10 October–17 January 2026

Warburg Institute, London

Aby Warburg's innovative approach to art history is given an affecting new purpose, writes **LUCY DAVIES**

Pause for a moment just inside Edward George's exhibition 'Black Atlas' at the Warburg Institute and your eyes will register two bodies with a near-identical posture. Both are photographs of artworks, the first a painting by Kees van Dongen from 1914 of Jack Johnson, boxing's first Black heavyweight champion and the son of freed slaves; the second an ethnographic daguerreotype of an unidentified man with his back to the camera. I suppose you could put the repeat down to coincidence, but a few steps in, the same shape appears in a picture of a lynching, and a feeling of curiosity – even uneasiness – begins.

The whole show – three multi-image triptychs and a film piece – is alive with these sorts of echoes. Whichever of the 50 or so pictures on the wall your eyes happen to alight on, something else will jostle for attention in a corner of your vision or your memory, and the opportunity to reflect on possible harmonies or tensions is intentionally provocative.

Commissioned by the Warburg, the exhibition is a response to the Image of the Black archive, an encyclopaedic collection of 30,000 reference photographs that the Institute acquired in 1999. Established by the French-American collectors Dominique and Jean de Menil at the height of the Civil Rights movement in the US, it documents the presence of people of African heritage in Western art from antiquity to the middle of the 20th century, and it's never been on public display in Britain before.

It's an extraordinary inheritance, exhaustive in scope and rippling with eccentricities, though not without its snags. Not least that any insight such a gathering of images might claim to provide into changing perceptions of Africa and ideas about race and Blackness over the past 5,000 years is filtered through Western art and Western eyes. 'The caveat is "nothing is by you",' said George, who was

installing the exhibition when I visited. 'It's anti-racist, but doesn't absolve itself.'

George, a multi-disciplinary artist and a founding member of the Black Audio Film Collective, has long been preoccupied with ideas about history, memory, race and nation. Here, his response to the Image of the Black archive amounts to a form of visual exegesis that conveys both its stretch and – critically – its strangeness, but also his own process of discovery: a year sifting through photocopies of pictures on his hands and knees in the Warburg's basement, keeping to one side anything that confused or surprised him. The startling number of images depicting a medieval miracle in which a white man's diseased leg was replaced with one cut from a deceased black man, for instance. Or so legend has it.

'Black Atlas' takes its name from the *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, a radical visual experiment by Warburg Library founder Aby Warburg, a German art historian and cultural theorist, for which he pinned clusters of images (postcards, diagrams, newspaper clippings, parts of paintings and so on) to black hessian-covered panels in order to map connections between cultural artefacts throughout history. Named for Mnemosyne, the Greek goddess of memory and mother of the nine muses, his project upended the tradition of considering pictures only in terms of their adherence to an academic style, and is now hailed as an artwork in itself.

In the exhibition, George replicates those black boards, arranging them as three triptychs that call to mind the folding 'winged' altarpieces that proliferated in churches throughout northern Europe during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Its subtle nod to the canon of European art must be intentional – there are others all over the show, such as a panorama curtain that inverts one of Botticelli's illustrations of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Each picture goes against these familiar historical currents, or sometimes with them.

Of course, by virtue of its setting, the exhibition must necessarily engage with

the traditions of art history, whether good or ill. The Warburg is home, after all, not only to the library and papers of a scholar who dedicated his life to understanding the power of the image, but also the archive of its longest-serving director, E.H. Gombrich, whose book *The Story of Art* has been required reading for art historians since its publication in 1950. You even pass a vitrine presenting its various covers on your way in.

Crowning 'Black Atlas' is an hour-long film: a sequence of pictures narrated in elliptical but poetic fashion by George with a sound-collage score by artists Crystabel Riley and Seymour Wright (George's fellow band members in the group X-Ray Hex Tet). Its shifting cast of saints, magi, warriors, evocations of 'exotic foreigners', ladies' maids and the enslaved roams across centuries of fantasy, fear and fascination with Blackness, with a lilt and insistence that is intensely affecting.

What's on the black boards then? Lots. A painting by Degas, a 'smoking negro' clock, a 16th-century manuscript, cutlery with carved handles, Queen Victoria's seal for the island of Jamaica, a curtain for a moving panorama of the Mississippi Valley. The way they are arranged in their clusters feels sparse but taut, and invigoratingly unpredictable. We are nudged from oddity to oddity, rather than held by the scruff of the neck, so that overall the show feels less like censure than an invitation.

Just as Warburg was perpetually tinkering with his *Bilderatlas*, George will change the constellations of images over the run of the exhibition. He has also chosen to present them without captions, but an optional handout is available. Though at first it makes you feel at sea, resist the lure of that familiar frame if you can, because once set loose from hobbling detail and context, the images perform differently, their emotional weight rising beautifully to the fore.

Lucy Davies's most recent books are about Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun (National Gallery/Yale) and Mabel Pryde Nicholson (Eiderdown).

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OFF THE SHELF

Apollo's selection of new books on art, architecture and the history of collecting

Waterloo Bridge and London River: Investigations and Reflections

Andrew Saint

Lund Humphries, £29.99

ISBN 9781848227347

'The one thing constant about the Thames is change,' writes Saint in this roving study, in which the river and its environs are viewed from numerous angles: architectural, artistic, historical, sociological. This was Saint's last book – he died in July – and is full of eccentric anecdotes, lyricism and insight drawn from a long career as one of the pre-eminent architectural historians of his generation.



10 Entrance to the Fleet River, London, c.1750. In a painting formerly attributed to Samuel Scott, various types of river craft are depicted, including spritsail barges



Political Girl: Life and Fate in Russia

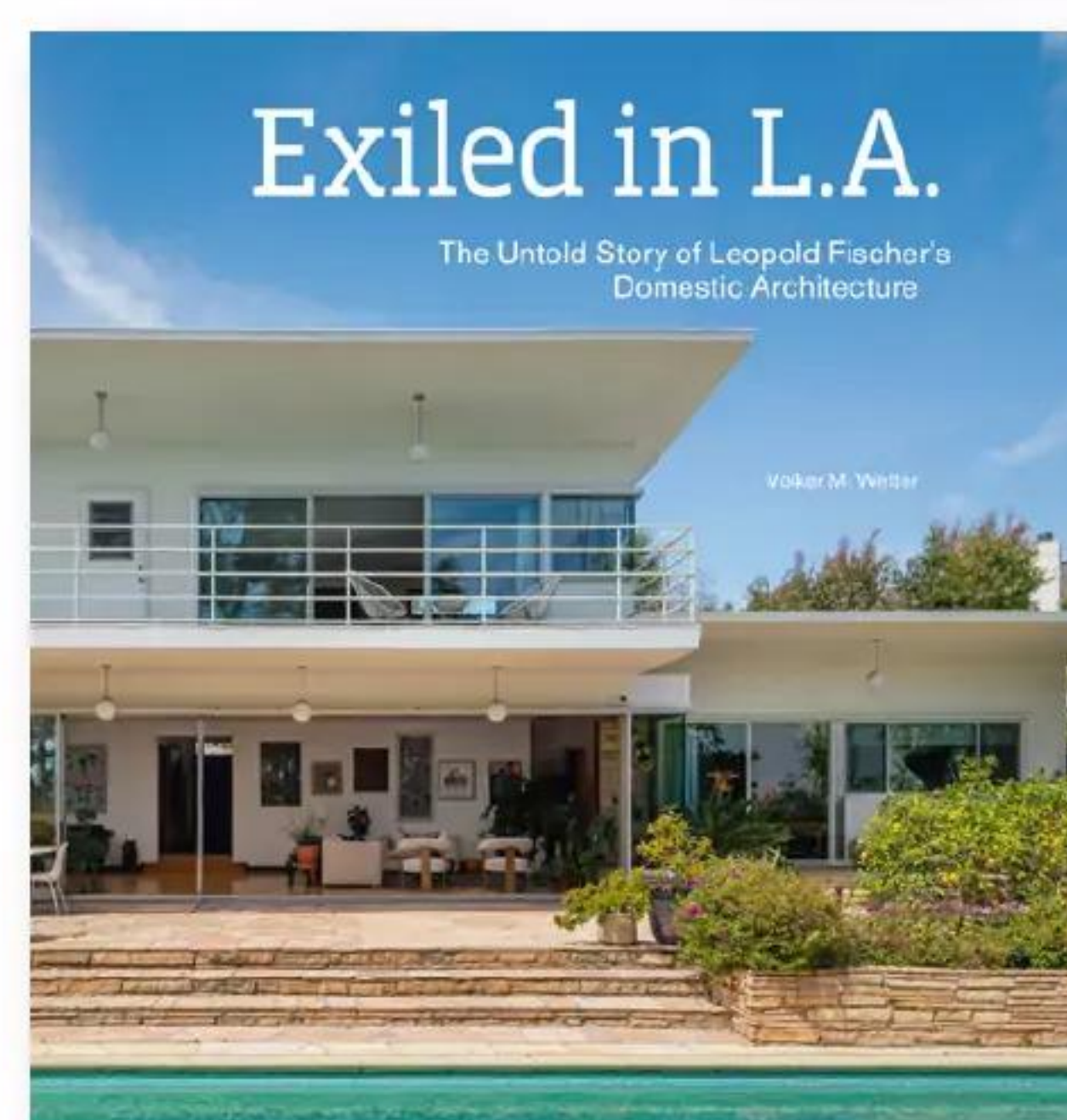
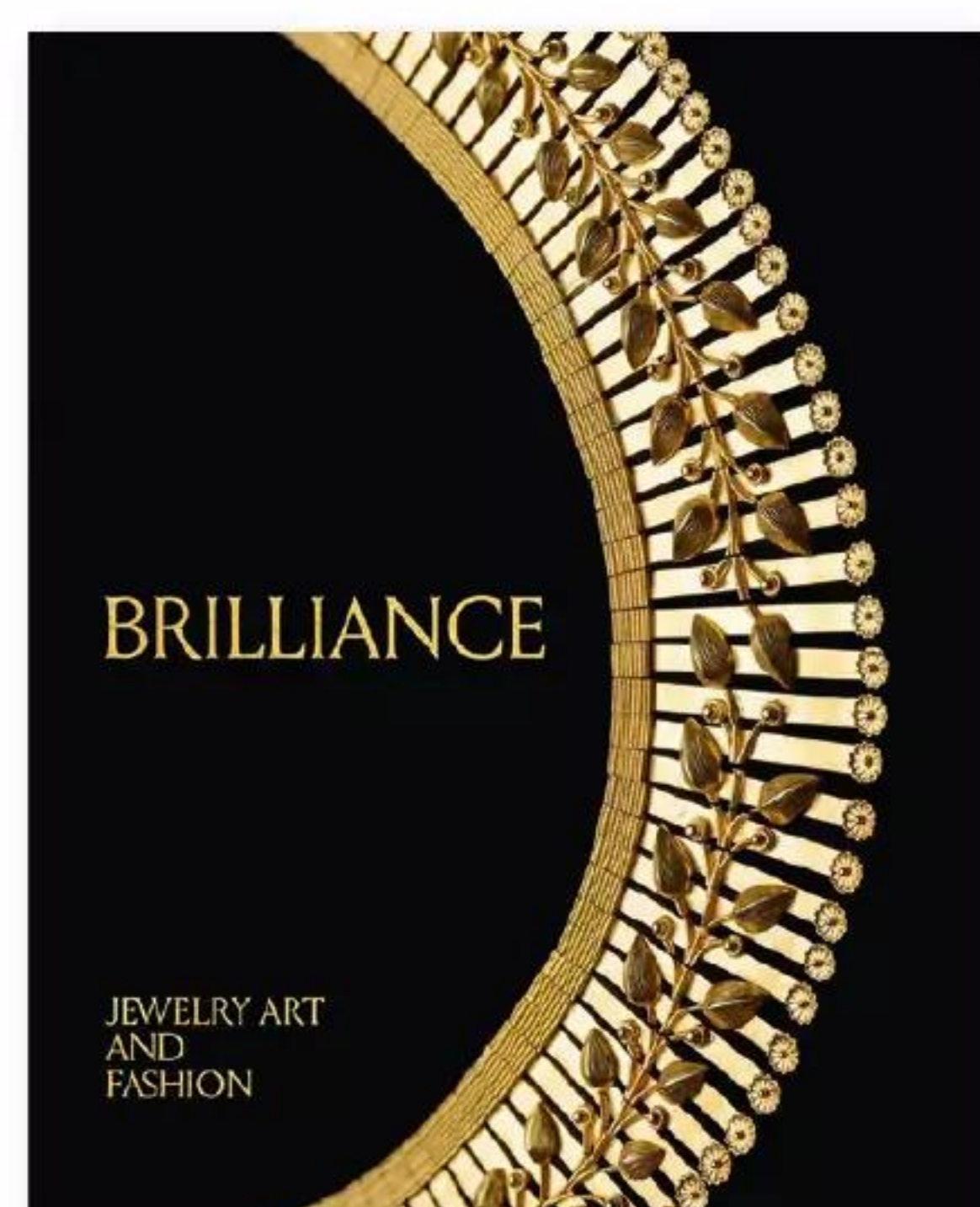
Maria Alyokhina; translated from Russian by Emily Eccles
Allen Lane, £25
ISBN 9780241670118

This punchy memoir by the artist and Pussy Riot member takes us from her release from prison in 2014 up to her escape from Russia in 2022. No punches are pulled; chapter titles include 'Happy Birthday, Executioners' and 'Nazi Propaganda'.

Brilliance: Jewelry Art and Fashion

Emily Stoehrer (ed.)
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, \$55
ISBN 9780878469055

More than 150 pieces from the museum's collection, from ancient Egyptian collars to masterpieces of contemporary jewellery, are illustrated in full splendour here. The book also includes several in-depth essays focusing on individual items.



Exiled in L.A.: The Untold Story of Leopold Fischer's Domestic Architecture

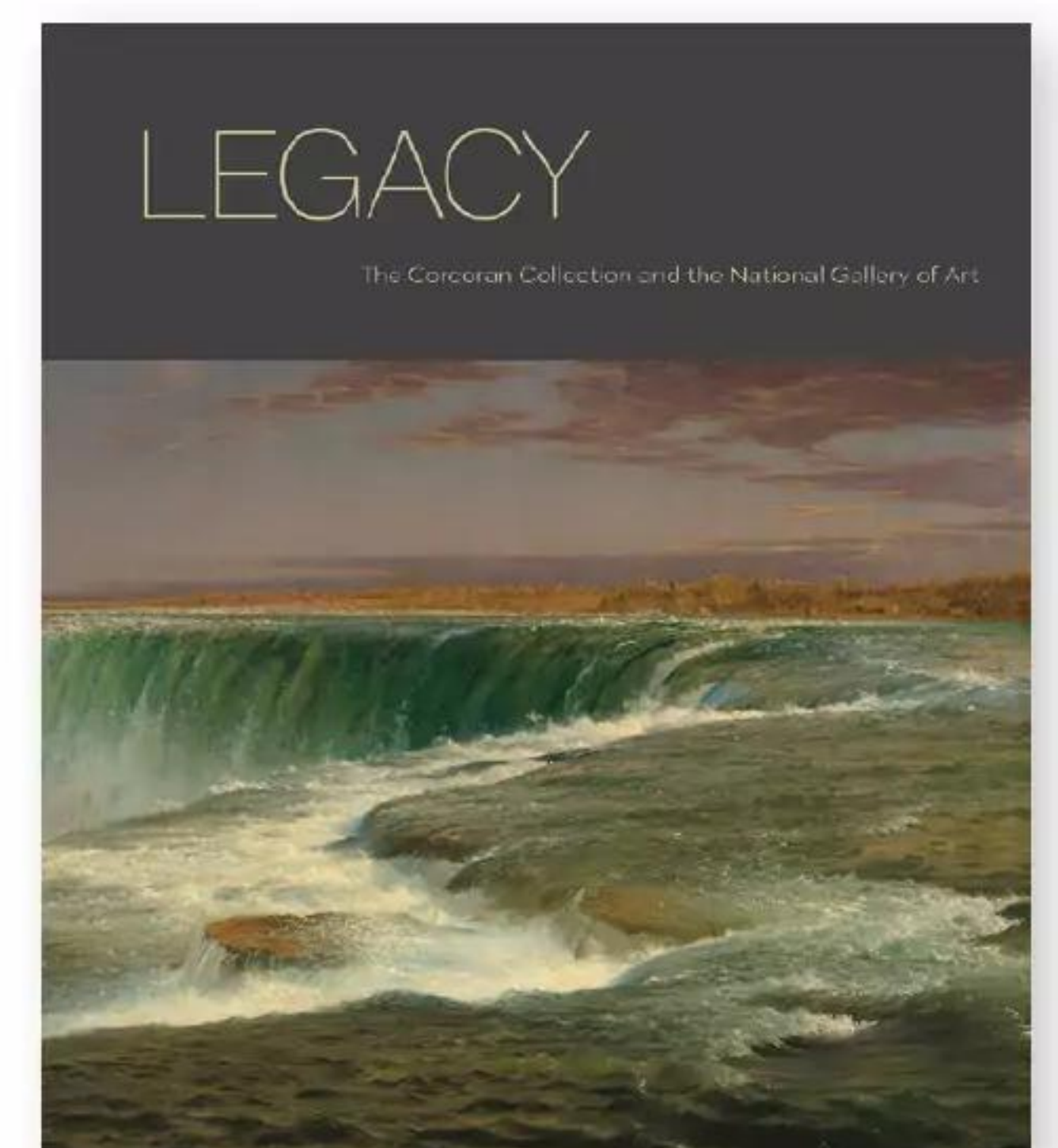
Volker M. Welter
Getty Research Institute, £40
ISBN 9781606069868

Here Welter looks at the functional, ecologically forward-thinking modernist homes built by the little-known architect during his exile from Nazi Germany. None of these houses are open to the public; this book, full of detailed illustrations, is the next best thing.

Legacy: The Corcoran Collection and the National Gallery of Art

Sarah Cash and Lynne Cooke Scala, \$65
ISBN 9781785515958

The Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C. was founded in 1869; when it shut in 2014 its collection went to the National Gallery of Art. This book examines the significance of the collection, which ranges from antiquities to contemporary art.



Open house

**The Maverick's Museum:
Albert Barnes and his American Dream**
Blake Gopnik

CHRISTOPHER TURNER on the American who brought modern European art to the masses

The American collector Albert C. Barnes earned his fortune selling Argyrol, a silver-based gonorrhoeal antiseptic that was, according to one British doctor, 'the best thing we have had since the introduction of cocaine'. Venereal disease gave Barnes an almost limitless market for his invention, which was even prescribed to infants. A few drops in a newborn's eye prevented ocular infections that might be picked up in the birth canal. 'With the money acquired from a product which prevents blindness,' read a 1928 profile in the *New Yorker*, 'Dr Barnes purchases pictures for the sight to feast upon'. On the eve of the Great Depression, Barnes sold his business for \$5 million, able to plough even more of his fortune into modern art just as many others were forced to sell their own collections. 'I came back from Europe with the richest plunder ever,' Barnes boasted.

As Blake Gopnik's zippy, zesty biography has it, Barnes came from a rough part of Philadelphia called the Neck and had an absent, alcoholic father: 'I came into the world maladjusted – and I'm still that,' Barnes wrote. He was insecure and irascible, brutal and sardonic, broad and pugnacious, always ready to sling insults and use his fists. With his newfound wealth, the chemist millionaire armoured himself in Savile Row suits and fast, stylish cars. He also built himself a mansion called Lauraston on Philadelphia's Main Line, the gilded suburbs that sprung up along the railway west of the city. Barnes called on his best friend from high school, the artist William Glackens, who had cofounded New York's Ashcan school of socially conscious painters, when he was looking to buy art to decorate its walls.

Instead of the Dutch landscapes and British portraits favoured by his neighbours, Barnes started collecting the Ashcans as a way of supporting his friend and circle. In 1912, Glackens was dispatched to Paris with \$20,000 in cash to be an early American buyer of the radical European art that the Ashcans held in such esteem. Glackens befriended Leo and Gertrude Stein, who were his aesthetic guides to the city, and acquired Van Gogh's *Postman* (1889), the first

work by the artist to reach the United States, along with 32 other works by artists including Cézanne, Renoir and Picasso. The next year, Barnes followed him to Europe, waving 'his chequebook in the air', according to Gertrude Stein, who sold him two Matisse. Barnes spent \$60,000 in a week and at one Parisian auction bid so much for Cézanne's *Five Bathers* (1878) that 'derisive laughter' broke out. In 1920, he acquired 13 more works by the artist that had been on loan to the Rijksmuseum, including an impressive painting of Mont Sainte-Victoire.

Buying art had become an obsession – Barnes compared his collecting bug to having rabies – which gave meaning to his rich but empty life. He said that looking at the fleshy Renoirs he owned (he had a penchant for nudes) helped to dissolve his 'damnable' psychological complexes. In 1917 he audited a class at Columbia University by John Dewey, and the philosopher's ideas of pragmatism, which prioritised experience over theory, gave further rationale to Barnes's shopping. The two became firm friends and Dewey was a frequent visitor to Lauraston, whose every surface was now crammed with art. Barnes's Argyrol factory became something of an educational experiment in what Dewey called 'Art as Experience'. It was decorated with more than 100 paintings, even in the rest rooms, and Barnes introduced two hours of humanist discussion into the workday to 'awaken' his employees' aesthetic lives.

Barnes employed a majority of Black workers in his factories and was a vocal champion of Black culture. He thought that 'ancient negro art', of which he amassed a large collection, was 'equal to the best of ancient Greece and Egypt'. He found in it the stylisation and rough, simplified forms that he admired in French art, and was aware of the ways in which France's

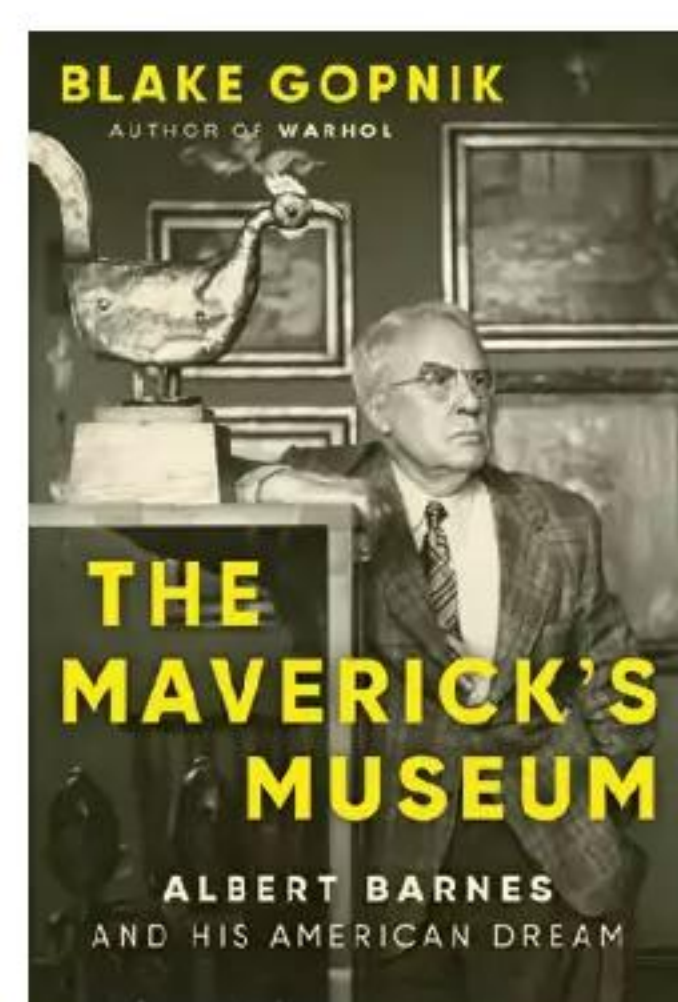
colonial loot had inspired that avant-garde. Gopnik is cynical of Barnes's support for Black rights, dismissing his European Primitivism and paternalistic attitude, though 'real ... and heartfelt', as largely rhetorical.

In 1925 Barnes opened a museum to show his 600 works of modern art – among them 150 Renoirs, 50 Cézannes, 22 Picassos and 12 Matisse. He wanted a house museum like the Wallace Collection, and the result was a surprisingly staid Beaux-Arts structure, the interiors of which were domestically scaled, with small rooms and high windows that illuminated his paintings from above. His foundation put Deweyism into practical effect (Barnes later also became a patron to Bertrand Russell, who lectured there). Jacques Lipchitz was commissioned to do cubist bas-reliefs on the exterior and Matisse to paint a huge mural, *The Dance*, inside. Barnes quickly added Odilon Redon, Giorgio de Chirico and Amedeo Modigliani to his collection, as well as numerous African works, and expensive trophy paintings including Seurat's *Models* and Cézanne's *Card Players*. This was a decade before the Museum of Modern Art, and indeed its founding director Alfred Barr was a 24-year-old pilgrim to 'the finest collection of modern painting in America'.

Barnes was a strict formalist, interested in aesthetic immersion and microscopic analysis over narrative and iconography. He was an advocate of slow looking: 'Art appreciation can no more be absorbed by aimless wandering in galleries than surgery can be learned by casual visits to a hospital,' he warned. Visits to his museum were only by appointment and, even then, the eccentric, dyspeptic proprietor would insist on giving a lecture and might eject you for admiring art in 'incorrect' ways. As a result, his stellar collection went largely unseen. Barnes died in 1951.

In 2012, despite a vigorous campaign by the Friends of the Barnes Foundation, the institution moved to a sleek, new campus near the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The interiors replicate the old museum, with its unusual juxtaposition of paintings and antiques – a collection estimated to be worth \$25bn.

Christopher Turner is Keeper of Art, Architecture, Photography and Design at the Victoria and Albert Museum.



Ecco, £28
ISBN 9780063284036



Models, 1886–88, Georges Seurat (1839–1906), oil on canvas, 200 × 249.9cm. Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia



A stone sculpture in Pier Francesco Orsini's garden at the Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo

Photo: Nostos, Giancarlo De Leo/Electa/Mondadori Portfolio via Getty Images

REVIEW

The Italian job

Bomarzo

Manuel Mujica Lainez

Translated from Spanish by Gregory Rabassa

TIM SMITH-LAING is intrigued and irked by a riddling novel about a Renaissance puzzle

You cannot fault the pedigree of Manuel Mujica Lainez's *Bomarzo*. On its original publication in Argentina in 1962 it was praised by Borges for bringing back the spirit of Robert Louis Stevenson and Victor Hugo to the modern novel, and promptly went on to win the Gran Premio Nacional de Literatura. Never out of print in Spanish, this new edition of Gregory Rabassa's 1969 translation comes as a welcome chance to read a book that, in prospect at least, is mouthwatering – above all for devotees of early modern Italy.

Framed as the memoirs of the real-life 16th-century nobleman Pier Francesco Orsini, *Bomarzo* is a paeon to the era, and to one of its strangest creations: the so-called Sacro Bosco sculpture garden at the eponymous estate near Viterbo. Its pages plunge the reader deep into a glittering and sanguinary world decorated by Cellini, Michelangelo and Vasari, populated by Medicis, Farneses and Borgias, and ravaged by familial, political and religious conflict. Few backdrops have either better brand recognition or more to conjure with, and Mujica Lainez's Italy is sumptuous: at once minutely and grandly imagined through its own art as a kind of ekphrastic hallucination of pomp and perfidy. Among the wars and intrigues, Vicino – as Orsini was known – passes as a simultaneously powerful and marginal figure: the hunchbacked second son of a powerful *condottiero*, who rises by luck and murder to the status of family head, before retreating to his estate and creating his 'Sacred Wood of Monsters'.

A series of sculptural follies created after the death of Vicino's wife, the Sacro Bosco is an enigma not unlike a three-dimensional *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. An inspiration to Salvador Dalí, Niki de Saint Phalle, and Michelangelo Antonioni as well as Mujica Lainez, it is one of those grand historical oddities that craves an explanation. And that is exactly what Mujica Lainez's Vicino sets out to provide. While the historical Vicino – *sans* hunchback, *sans* homicides – is something of a cipher in the archives, Mujica Lainez's narrator is a wounded monster desperate to

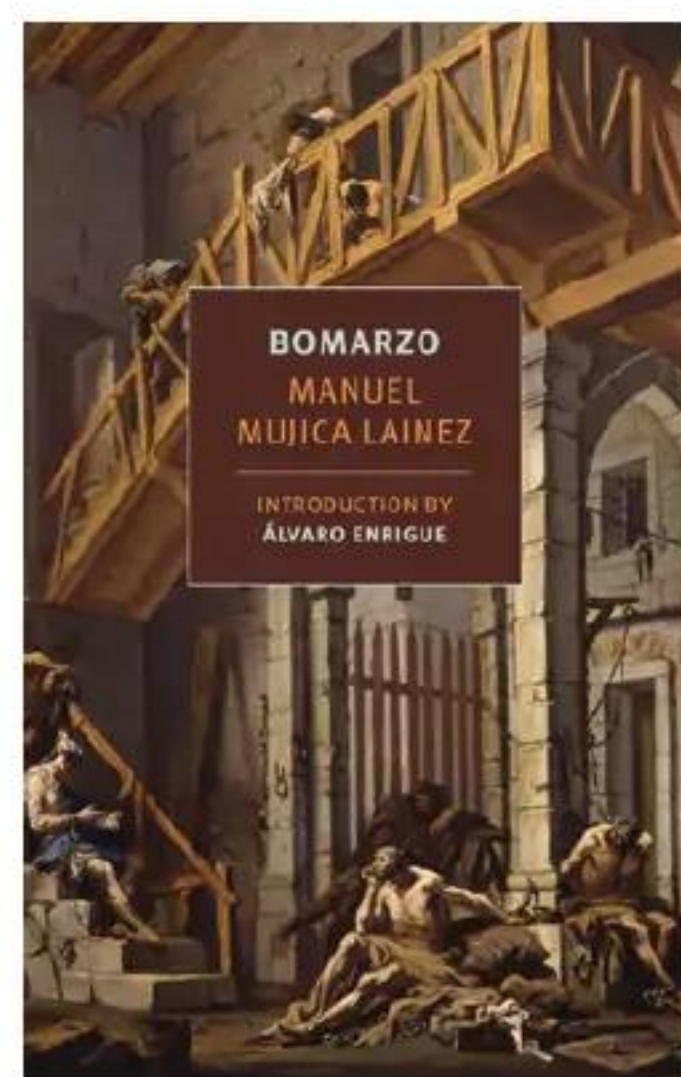
tell the story of his life as culminating in his garden. In doing so, Vicino is equipped with the insights provided by a strand of fantasy that renders him immortal and allows him to speak across the centuries from an Olympian perspective, adding references to Toulouse-Lautrec, Nabokov and Nerval to the already overstuffed prose.

For all the glittering backdrop and the intrinsic interest of the Sacro Bosco, *Bomarzo*'s allure relies on Vicino's voice. With much of Shakespeare's Richard III, and a good deal of Humbert Humbert, he is that classic figure: the baddie who tells all, and aims to seduce in the telling. Only, I was not seduced. Rarely has a book so tempting in prospect proven so frustrating in the reading.

The prose, as Álvaro Enrigue notes in his introduction, is redolent of 19th-century French decadence, but the methodology is firmly of the Freudian 20th century. The result is a suffocating combination of aesthetic overload with the solipsism and repetition of the talking cure. Here, for instance, is an early sentence:

My horror of ugliness and my passion for beauty in human beings, in objects, in poetical games, had produced disappointment and bitterness in me, but it had given my life an exalted tone and a certain tormented grandeur: it came from a horror of myself and the resulting disgust caused in me by any teratological aberration.

If this were not explanation enough, the next paragraph enters into the topic of Vicino's future interest in antiquities – which naturally he holds for 'more complex reasons' than any of his contemporaries.



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Perhaps I had hoped that the nearness of those harmonious survivors would be some kind of magical therapy for me; perhaps I had calculated that if I sank into a sea of beauty, surrounding myself with rhythmic marbles until I disappeared behind their intertwined appearances [...] where every item, the smoothness of a brow, the arc of an arm, the proportions of a chest, would arouse the emotions that joined poetry to mathematics, it would succeed in making me forget about myself.

These are both virtuosic sentences, yet at the same time subject to an insistent psychological determinism that, continued as it is over 600 pages, becomes positively bludgeoning. While the dictum of 'Show don't tell' can be over-obeyed, it is sometimes nice to be shown, or at least to be told only once. Wedded to his self-analysis, Vicino is a pleasureless, and therefore rather charmless, narrator.

There are pleasures here, which will affect different readers to a greater or lesser extent. As in many historical novels there is both the delight of celebrity spotting and the danger of name-dropping. Vicino is kissed by Cellini, painted by Lotto, accompanied by Vasari at the court of the Medicis, treated for syphilis by Paracelsus and loaned a book by Cervantes. The prose, too, comes to life when Mujica Lainez plugs it into sources such as Benozzo Gozzoli's Magi Chapel in Florence (c. 1459) to evoke the pomp and glory of the era.

But celebrity and ekphrasis are not always enough. With the spirit of Hugo invoked, I found myself longing to re-read *Notre Dame de Paris* – which is, for all its flaws, simultaneously exciting and jaw-droppingly rich in its prose. There are novels both longer and shorter that do the job so much better. Hugo lives on far more clearly in the baggy yarn of Neal Stephenson's *Baroque Cycle* (deceptively readable at just under 3,000 pages long) while Marguerite Yourcenar's *The Abyss* (just over 300) remains unbeatable as a foray into the psychology of a so-called Renaissance Man. As for the mystery of the Sacro Bosco itself, perhaps the best thing is simply to cut out the middleman and go to Bomarzo for oneself.

Tim Smith-Laing is a writer, arts critic and teacher based in London.

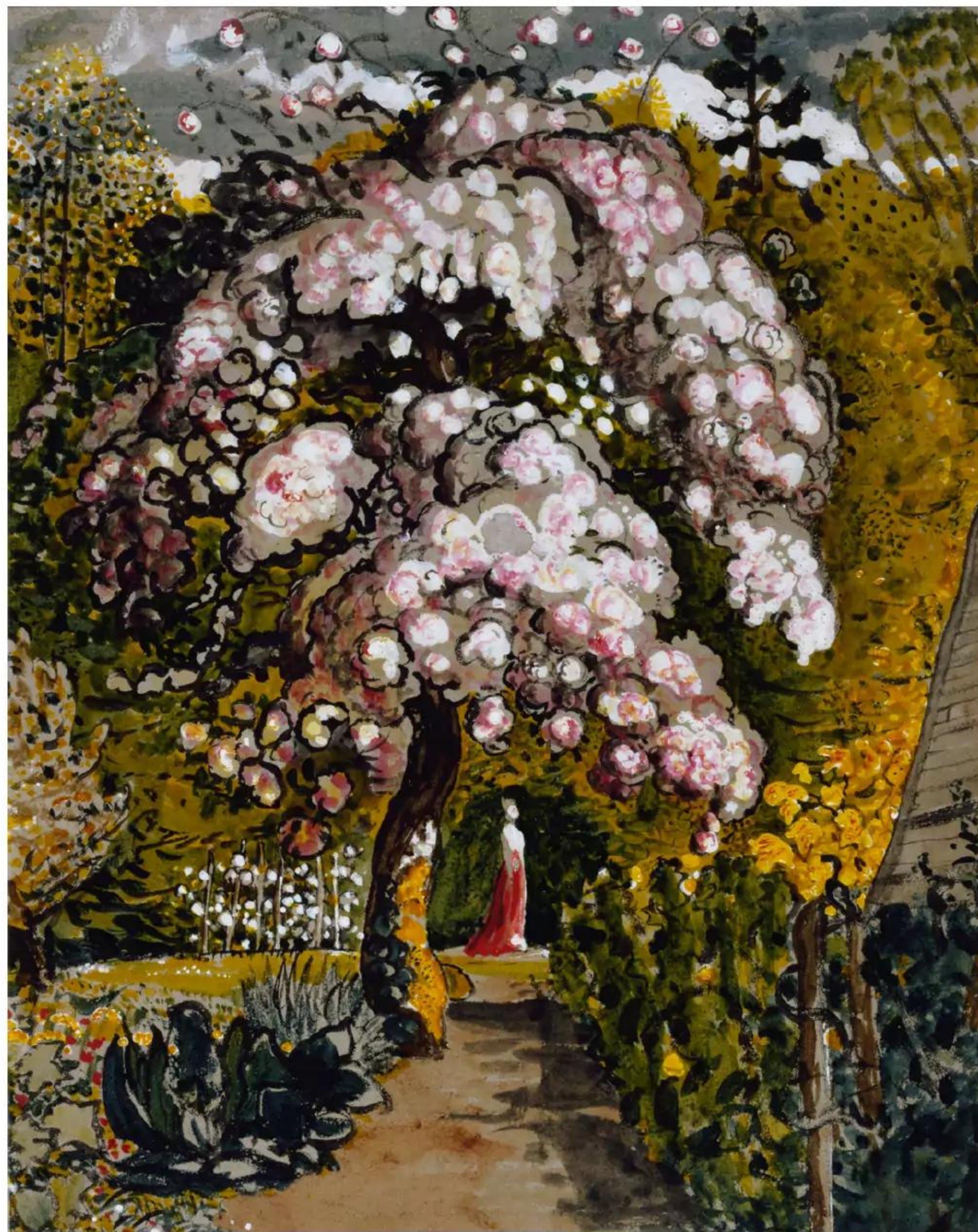
Escape to the country

MARY KEEN on Samuel Palmer's all too tempting vision of rural bliss

In Samuel Palmer's painting *In a Shoreham Garden* (c. 1830), the viewer is struck by the stillness. Like the best gardens, it is somewhere to stop, to escape from the world: a place where the everyday hum is dimmed. Gardens slow people down, so that they have time to stare and think.

When he was homesick on the streets of London, Yeats dreamed of retreating to his imagined plot on the isle of Innisfree, writing 'And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow.' Equally fed up with the filth and grime of city life, in the mid 1820s the young Palmer left the capital for rural Kent, in the company of like-minded friends who all yearned, like Yeats, for a return to a simpler, quieter life. Their aim was to recapture the spiritual radiance of the Middle Ages. They called themselves the Ancients. They might now be labelled 'dropouts', but they were fired by the idealism of youth and they thought that they could make the world a better place.

For the few years he was there, Palmer walked, talked and dreamed in between painting his idyll. For him, Shoreham was always surrounded by a halo of light. From the right of his garden, the bright sun shimmers as it gleams on the trunk of the tree. The impasto on the blossom is so thick that it looks as though the picture was painted in oils, but it is in fact a work in watercolour and gouache. The painting represents one of those heart-stopping moments when it is hard to believe that the world can be so beautiful – that after a long winter, spring has at last arrived and the garden is coming to life again. And there, behind the tree, a figure stands, paused to gaze at the blossom, as we in turn gaze at her, sharing that long-ago moment of wonder. It's an idealised scene, mystic and dreamy, part pagan



In a Shoreham Garden, c. 1830, Samuel Palmer (1805–81), watercolour, 28.2 × 22.3cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

worship, part familiar delight, but it shows us a moment which, two centuries on, can still happen to anyone.

I think I respond more to minor works than major ones, and especially to those artists who, like Palmer, could conjure that mysterious refuge that is the natural world. Some of my favourite artists, who are part of a particularly English lyric, mystic tradition – such as Paul Nash, David Jones, the etcher F.L. Griggs or the young Graham Sutherland – were inspired by a major exhibition of Palmer's largely forgotten work in 1926. The photographs of James Ravillious, son of Eric, also sometimes have that otherworldly quality. In all these works there are element

of strangeness: what on the surface looks like an ordinary scene has a suggestion of unreality. Once, in my last garden, I came upon two visitors whispering and I asked if they were all right. 'We don't want to break the spell,' they answered. Palmer's visionary paintings are, for me, spell-binding.

If I had an even smaller garden than my present one, I would always want the hint of an orchard. Just one apple tree would be enough, because it really is a miracle to own any tree that paints itself with foaming blossom in spring and then swells with fruit in autumn. Palmer's *The Magic Apple Tree* (1830) in the Fitzwilliam in Cambridge is lovely, but I like the Shoreham garden tree better, because the promise of fruit holds so much more than the sight of scarlet windfalls on the ground. I sometimes wonder if the Shoreham tree was not an apple but a pear. Pear blossom tends to be larger and pinker than apple and the shape of the tree more conical. Christianity

identifies the apple tree as the tree of knowledge, but in Celtic and Norse mythology it represents immortality.

Times are troubled now. Cities may be cleaner than they were when Palmer or Yeats made their escape, but horrible things are still happening all over the world. Now more than ever is it tempting to retreat from an alien world to the solace of the garden, to believe that somewhere a perfect radiant place exists, where all will be well and all manner of things will be well, and where we might at last feel it 'in the deep hearts core'.

Mary Keen's book Diary of a Keen Gardener is published this month by John Murray.

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Niki de Saint Phalle, *La Déesse noire*, 1993. © Photograph by Laurent Condominas / ADAGP / Niki Charitable Art Foundation.
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